

Teaching Hong Kong Chinese Students to Read and Write about  
English Literature: A Proposal for Curriculum Renewal

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This thesis is dedicated to

Dr. Guy Cook

with respect

"Give a man a fish to eat and he will ask for more;  
Teach a man to fish and he will never hunger."

Chinese Proverb

## THESIS OUTLINE

Title: "Teaching Hong Kong Chinese Students to Read and Write about  
English Literature: A Proposal for Curriculum Renewal"

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **Abstract**

After almost a century of British colonial rule, Hong Kong will be returned to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997. Since the early 1980s, when negotiation between China and Britain on the future of Hong Kong began, important changes have been taking place in Hong Kong society. To prepare for the post-colonial period, different kinds of preparation have been made, including the gradual introduction of language and educational reforms. Against this larger background, this thesis discusses a specific issue within a specific setting, namely the teaching of English literature (and language) in the University of Hong Kong. The major argument is that in the light of the many changes that have been taking place in Hong Kong in the past 15 years or so, and in the light of the post-colonial era that Hong Kong is soon to enter, a new literature curriculum is needed.

In Part I, (Chapter 1), the thesis begins by describing the socio-historical setting of Hong Kong; against this background, arguments for curriculum renewal are presented. It then goes on to present five reasons which support its contention for the introduction of a new curriculum. Part II, (which contains chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5), examines curriculum, reading, literary, and writing theories, as well as instructional materials, in order to lay a theoretical basis on which the proposed curriculum could be built. Part III, (Chapter 6), gives an example of such a curriculum by producing a version of it in the form of a syllabus, which is built around four short stories by the contemporary Chinese American woman writer Maxine Hong Kingston; this part also describes how the effectiveness of a resulting course was tested with two groups of students. In Part IV, (the Conclusion), the writer contends that the new curriculum does not only have relevance for Hong Kong, but could be applied to educational settings in Taiwan, China, other ex-British colonies, as well as other parts of the world.

# PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

The seed for my interest in the multifaceted factors related to the teaching of literature was first planted when I arrived in Tunghai University--A Christian University located in the central part of Taiwan--in September, 1978 as a brand new teacher. I had just then completed a postgraduate program in English and Comparative Literature, and had had no prior teaching experience.

I arrived expecting to teach basic language courses, and was pleasantly surprised when I was informed of my assignments: three literature classes, including five hours of "Introduction to Literature" (a compulsory course for freshmen who intend to major in English), six hours of "American Literature" (a requirement for all seniors), and a two-hour seminar on a literary topic of my own choosing. I was absolutely thrilled, partly because I love literature and felt I could devote a great deal of my time to reading and teaching the works I liked (as there was no set syllabus) and partly because I soon realized that these were highly coveted courses (by other colleagues)--and I alone had three of them in my hands. Why I was so richly endowed and specially blessed, I never found out.

The feeling of blessedness, however, did not last long. When I actually sat down to write the course syllabuses and notes for the first lectures, my initial excitement and joy were soon overtaken by panic and apprehension. I became aware of the enormity of the task before me, and the great deal of time and energy required to perform it, as well as the persistence and perseverance to do it well. I wanted desperately to escape.

But I was already at the battle front; it was too late to retreat, so I fought on. Thirteen hours of lecture were indeed a very heavy load for a first year teacher, and the amount of time that went into preparation was enormous. Sometimes, a lecture took six to eight hours to prepare, as it involved doing a vast amount of reading, selecting, summarizing, and then condensing them into major points to be presented in class. Reading and writing were time consuming, but could be coped with given sufficient time and stamina, and they actually became easier as the year went by. But communicating my ideas to the students--the actual teaching process--turned out to be the most difficult part. Besides my lack of teaching experience, I was further handicapped by my ignorance of the various aspects of higher education in Taiwan. Having grown up in Hong Kong, and having gone to university and graduate school in the U.S., I was a total stranger in the Taiwan setting, unaware of the standard and disposition of the college students there. I was never quite sure whether what I said in class had gotten across to my students, whether they found the class materials too easy or too difficult. I could never actually predict if a lecture was going to be successful or whether it would turn out to be a total fiasco.

Desperate for help, I turned to others for advice. I consulted many of my colleagues, who shared with me valuable insight and offered very precious teaching tips. I talked to friends and my own students, who also gave useful feedback. These dialogues proved to be very enlightening--not only because the feedback I obtained provided solutions (partially) to my immediate problems, but also because it challenged me to think more deeply about the issue of teaching English literature to Chinese students.

During the process of teaching, thinking, and dialoguing with various people, more and more questions came to mind. Some of them--recurrent ones, are

these: Can we teach English literature to Chinese students in exactly the same way as we do to English speaking students? Should students be allowed to read translations? How do students with a different cultural orientation (from that of the literature they are studying) respond to a "foreign" literature? What are some of the difficulties students may encounter when they read English literature? Many of these questions remain partially or totally unanswered. My concern for tackling and proposing possible solutions to these problems deepened as the years went by.

My concern lies not only with the various issues related to teaching but also the quality of our students as well. A strong impression that stood out during my first year of teaching in Tunghai was that many of my seniors, with three years of teaching behind them, who presumably had read a great range of literary works and written a substantial number of papers, did not seem, in fact, to have a firm grasp of how literature could be approached. When given a story, a poem, or a play, they did not quite know how to approach it--how to appreciate, analyze, or criticize it, on their own, that is, when no introductions or instructions were provided.

Apparently, throughout the past three years or so, my students had been "fed"--spoonfed, but not taught (not adequately) the methods of "feeding" themselves; they were given fish to eat, but not taught the proper means of fishing. This phenomenon, which I believe is not limited to Tunghai, provides further impetus for efforts to re-examine our methods of instruction (of literature) at the basic level. Can we assume that our students leave their freshman "Introduction to Literature" with a clear understanding of literary concepts and solid grip of the ways to approach literature? In other words, to return to my earlier metaphor: are they introduced to the basic techniques of

fishing so that they are capable of doing it on their own, with decreasing amount of help and guidance from their teachers in their subsequent years in the university? And a further challenge: can we be sure that they are not afraid to fish, or better still, that they enjoy fishing--because they know how to?

After spending a year in Taiwan, I returned to the United States for further training and completed two more M.A. degrees in language education and higher education. Since then, I have taught in National Taiwan University and the University of Hong Kong. Over the years, literature has remained my first love in life and the teaching of literature a concern that continues to linger in my mind.

Thinking about issues related to the teaching of literature has become a life-long pursuit. It is natural, therefore, when I decided to work towards a PhD that this is the area of research I want to engage in. My interest in this field began in Taiwan, some 15 years ago, but now I have chosen to write about Hong Kong, for three reasons: first, at the time when I started writing this thesis (May, 1992), I had been teaching in the University of Hong Kong for seven years, and I expect to remain here for another period of time. This is the context I am most familiar with and most concerned about at this stage of my life.

Second, Hong Kong is at a very significant juncture in its history. The approach of 1997, when Hong Kong will cease to be a British colony and become a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, is affecting society on all levels and in all respects; literature curricula within the local universities will inevitably have to undergo changes as well. To come up with a curriculum that will meet the needs of students who will enter university



in the post-colonial era is a task that should not be delayed.

Thirdly, in broad terms, one can say that when Hong Kong reverts to Chinese sovereignty in a few months' time, it will become more similar to Mainland China and Taiwan. Chinese will become more the native tongue and English literature more a foreign literature. The curriculum that I propose here, I believe, will have implications not only for Hong Kong Chinese students but also for the Chinese students in Taiwan and Mainland China, as well as students who are studying English literature as a foreign literature in other parts of the world.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

## Purpose of Study

The general purpose of this thesis is to argue for a closer link between content and language in "English" courses in ESL/EFL (1) settings on the college/university level in order to enhance students' ability to read and write about literature. The study focuses on the University of Hong Kong (HKU), but the recommendations it makes will have relevance for similar educational settings in Taiwan, Mainland China, former British colonies in Asia and Africa, and possibly for other parts of the world.

More specifically, this thesis is written against a particular background and for the purpose of meeting a particular need. Beginning in September 1992, all first-year students coming into the Arts Faculty of HKU are required to take, besides a total of three full courses in their own faculty, an "English for Arts Students" (EAS) course offered by the English Centre (2). EAS is a compulsory but non-credit bearing course (3) and is taught in small groups of 12 to 15 students.

A student who intends to major in English, for example, will take "Introduction to Literary Studies" ( ILSE, offered by the English Department) as well as EAS (offered by the English Centre):

	English Department	English Centre
First Term	Introduction to Literary Studies in English 1	EAS 1
Second Term	Introduction to Literary Studies in English 2	EAS 2

The primary aim of the EAS course is to help students to improve their language skills so that they can better cope with their studies in the University. My proposal is that the year-long course be divided into two halves: in the first semester, all students follow a common syllabus, which focuses on academic writing. In the second semester, students are organized according to the courses they are taking in the Arts Faculty. In each kind of groups, a different discipline-specific module will be taught. The modules are "Reading and Writing about Literature," "Reading and Writing about History," "Reading and Writing about Philosophy," "Reading and Writing about Geography," "Reading and Writing about Music," "Reading and Writing about Art History."

In this scheme, a first-year English major will take the following courses:

	English Department	English Centre
First	Introduction to	EAS 1
Term	Literary Studies	(Academic
	in English 1	writing)
Second	Introduction to	EAS 2
Term	Literary Studies	"Reading
	in English 2	and Writing
		about literature"

Although I believe that modules need to be produced for all the six content areas, this study concentrates on the "Reading and Writing about Literature" module. It is built on curriculum theories, literary theories, and writing theories. Students are introduced to literary theories, are encouraged to apply them to the study of literary materials, and are then asked to write essays which provide them with the opportunities to put into practice what they have learned. The more specific purposes of this study are:

First, to contend that such a proposal for curriculum renewal --for the addition of the "Reading and Writing about Literature" module--is necessary;

Second, to explain the theoretical framework within which a curriculum of this kind is to be constructed;

Third, to describe a new curriculum; (the syllabus of the module I include in Chapter 6 of this thesis was used in the 1996-1997 academic year, and is an example of the kind of curriculum that I am proposing);

Fourth, to discuss the value and possible implications such a proposal may have for HKU and elsewhere.

Put in another way, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

First: Why is curriculum renewal called for at this stage of the development of language and literature-teaching in HKU? Why is it justified to introduce a content-based module into an EAS course?

Second: How is a curriculum to be constructed? What kinds of theories underlie a module? Why are the chosen theories more appropriate than others?

Third: What would a curriculum, and more specifically, a syllabus (4) of a module look like? What are its objectives and content? How is it taught? How is it evaluated?

Fourth: What value and implications might the curriculum have for future curricular developments in HKU? For similar settings in Hong Kong? For Taiwan and Mainland China? For other parts of the world?

### **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into four parts, and each part deals with one of the research questions stated above. Part I, "Renewing the Curriculum," tries to answer the first question; Part II, "Designing a New Curriculum," the second question; Part III, "A Proposed Curriculum," the third question; and Part IV,

"Extending a Proposed Curriculum," the fourth question. The amount of space devoted to each of the parts, however, is not equal. As this research is fundamentally a theoretical study, Part II takes up the largest proportion of the thesis.

Part I, entitled "Renewing the Curriculum," consists of two sections. The first section gives an overview of the geographical, historical, educational and language settings of Hong Kong, as well as HKU, especially the English Department and the English Centre. Such a description will provide the background against which the reasons for renewing the curriculum will be discussed, in the next section. In the second section of this chapter, I shall attempt to argue that curriculum renewal is needed in the light of the historical development of Hong Kong as well as the current situation in which HKU finds itself. Five major lines of argument are presented.

Part II bears the title "Designing a New Curriculum" and includes four chapters. This part of the thesis discusses the theories and the literary materials on which a curriculum is built.

Chapter 2 examines four major types of language syllabus, nine types of literature syllabus, as well as two models of curriculum development, and then discusses the relevance of these syllabus types and curriculum models to the HKU setting.

Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of two models of reading (and literature-reading), and then goes on to look at some of the major "approaches" to narratives in the history of modern literary theory. It will then attempt to find out to what extent, and by what means, can these theories be applied to the teaching of literature, and specifically, to the teaching of short

fiction. I have chosen to concentrate on short stories--as opposed to novels, drama, or poetry--because of two reasons: they are shorter and therefore can be taught within a semester; they are, for first-year students in HKU, easier to understand. I have not chosen novels and plays because of their length, and not poetry, because its linguistic complexity. It is important, for the curriculum that I am proposing, that the literary materials are not too long and that they could sustain the interests of the students. The significance of this explained in 1.3.1 and 5.2.2.

Chapter 4 has two sections. The first part reviews some of the recent trends in the teaching of writing in second language education. In the second part, two writing syllabuses, which combine different elements from the instructional methods discussed in the first section, are presented. The first syllabus is to be used in the first half of the year-long EAS course, and the second syllabus forms the writing component of the module, to be taught in the second half of the course.

Chapter 5 discusses criteria that are used for the selection of instructional materials for a literature course (for non-native speakers), and then argues that more Asian American literature, and specifically, Chinese American literature, could be included in the literature curriculum in HKU. It then goes on to discuss two novels by a Chinese American woman writer, Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, which contain the four short stories that are used in the module. The novels will be discussed in the light of their suitability as pedagogical materials for the students in HKU. These stories serve as examples of the types of instructional materials that could be used in such a module.

Part III, called "A Proposed Curriculum" consists of Chapter 6 and describes

the module "Reading and Writing about Literature." The chapter first gives an overall description of the module which was used in 1996-1997--its objectives and content; how it was taught; and how it was evaluated. The chapter also contains the actual instructional materials. The curriculum theories, literary theories, and writing theories discussed in Part II are applied to the teaching of four stories, "No Name Woman," and "White Tigers" from *The Woman Warrior*; and "The Father from China," and "The American Father" from *China Men*. The second part of the chapter describes a small-scale study, my attempt at actually using the instructional materials in the classroom. Students' evaluation of the module, as shown in an end-of-course questionnaire survey, is discussed.

Part IV, entitled "Extending A Proposed Curriculum," includes the Conclusion, discusses the implications such a proposal for curriculum renewal has for HKU, as well as for universities and tertiary institutions in Taiwan, Mainland China, and other parts of the world.

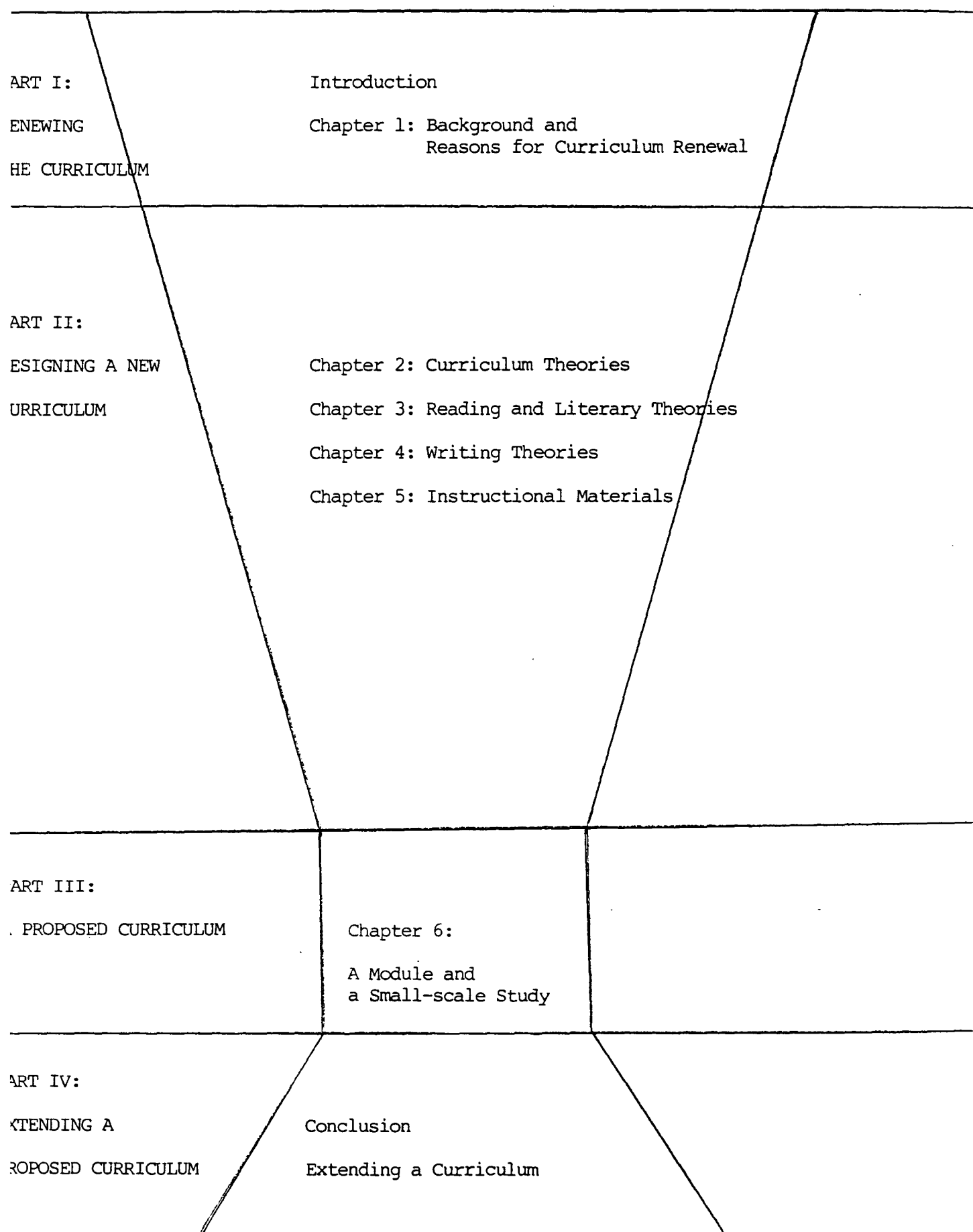
To sum up, the shape of the study resembles that of a funnel (see Fig. 1)(5): it begins by considering the necessity for curriculum renewal in the broad socio-political context of Hong Kong. Having argued that curriculum renewal is needed, it continues to examine several curricular, literary, and writing theories on which a curriculum can be built. It then describes a syllabus within this curriculum. Finally, the thesis argues that the curriculum can be extended and that it will have implications for its immediate setting as well as similar academic milieux in others parts of Asia, and the world.

### **Definition of Terms**

Some terms in the title of the thesis need to be defined.

First, "Hong Kong Chinese students": in this study, the "Hong Kong Chinese

Fig. 1: Pictorial Representation of the  
Structure of the Thesis





students" referred to as examples are male and female students between the ages of 18-22. Their mother tongue is Chinese (Cantonese) and they have received 13 years of English instruction before coming to the University. They are first-year students in the Arts Faculty of HKU. Every year, about 500 of them come into the Arts Faculty.

Second, "Reading and Writing about English Literature": should more accurately (but more clumsily) be expressed as "Reading English Literature and Writing about English literature." My emphasis here is on the word "reading": the aim of the curriculum is to teach students to read literary texts, and not materials about literary texts, such as literary criticism.

Third, "English Literature": I adopt a broad interpretation of the term "English literature" in this study. It refers not only to literary works produced by writers of England; rather, because my proposed curriculum is constrained by the curriculum in the English Department in HKU (as will be explained in the next section, "Definition of Scope,") I follow the three categories that the English Department uses to define the kinds of literature that it teaches:

- "British literature": which includes literary works produced by writers of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.
- "American literature": which includes literary works produced by writers in the United States. These writers encompass those from European origins, as well as those belonging to minority ethnic groups such as Blacks, Asians, Chicanos, and Native Americans.
- "Literatures in English": which include literary works written in English and produced by writers who were born or lived/live outside Britain and the United States. These may include Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, African, Asian, Caribbean writers. (This term is further discussed in Chapter 5).

These terms, of course, are not entirely satisfactory, and contain ambiguity that cannot be fully eradicated. There are, for example, problems related to the nationality of the writer, the language the writer uses as his (6) writing medium, and the subject matter that the writer chooses to write about. In terms of nationality: Would, for example, a writer who had lived in China for the first part of his literary career, and moved to the United States later in his life, become an American citizen, and began to produce works of literature--become an "American" writer? Would his earlier works be considered "Chinese literature" and his later works "American literature"? An example of such a writer is Chen Rouxi (7). In terms of subject matter: Would, for example, a writer who is a British citizen, but ethnically Japanese, who produces a piece of work entirely about Japan (involving Japanese characters who live in Japan) be considered a "Japanese" writer, and his work a piece of "Japanese" literature, rather than "British" literature?. Kazuo Ishiguro and his *An Artist of the Floating World* is a case in point (8). In terms of the language the writer uses: Would, for example, a writer who is an American citizen and who chooses to write about the American experience in Chinese be considered an "American" writer or a "Chinese" writer? Would the works he produce be regarded as "American" or "Chinese" literature? Wu Lihua (9) is an example of such a writer.

These are controversial issues that require more extensive discussion than is possible in this present study. For the purpose of this thesis, "English literature" refers to literary works that belong to the categories of "British literature," "American literature," and "literatures in English," as defined above, that are written in English regardless of the writers' nationality or subject matter.

Fourth, "Curriculum": in this study, I make a distinction between "curriculum"

and "syllabus." But the distinction of these two terms is not always easy to make. For example, the British and the Americans use the terms differently, as White (1988) explains:

In a distinction that is commonly drawn in Britain, "syllabus" refers to the content or subject matter of an individual subject, whereas "curriculum" refers to the totality of content to be taught and aims to be realized within one school or educational system. In the USA, "curriculum" tends to be synonymous with "syllabus" in the British sense (p.4).

White goes on to comment that the hierarchical distinction usual in Britain places syllabus in a subordinate position to curriculum (p.4). Allen (1984), provides another definition of the distinction:

... curriculum is a very general concept which involves consideration of the whole complex of philosophical, social and administrative factors which contribute to the planning of an educational program. Syllabus, on the other hand, refers to that sub-part of curriculum which is concerned with specification of what units will be taught (as distinct from how they will be taught, which is a matter for methodology) (p.61).

Stern (1984), on other other hand, considers the two terms to be synonymous when he says "... I would like to draw attention to a distinction between curriculum or syllabus and curriculum processes" (pp.10-11). The distinction he draws here is between curriculum and curriculum processes, and he seems to regard curriculum and syllabus as the same concept.

In my thesis, I follow the British sense of the two terms as explained by White, and consider syllabus as a subset of a curriculum; I also include Allen's definition of a curriculum in the sense that it takes into account the socio-historical, political, philosophical, and administrative factors that might affect the setting up of an educational program. Nevertheless, I depart from White's explanation of the curriculum and syllabus, and Allen's definition of the two terms in the following ways:

The "curriculum" I refer to in this thesis does not include a range of subjects (as in White's description of the British curriculum), nor does "syllabus" refer to one subject within a range of subjects. Rather, the curriculum in this study refers to a variety of content (literature)-based language courses; and a syllabus describes a specific course within the curriculum.

If a curriculum includes "objectives," "content," "method," "evaluation" (Tyler, 1949; White, 1988), then, my curriculum encompasses courses that share the same "objectives," "methods," and "evaluation," but different "content." Each individual course has a syllabus. Fig. 2 shows the relationship between the curriculum and the syllabuses:

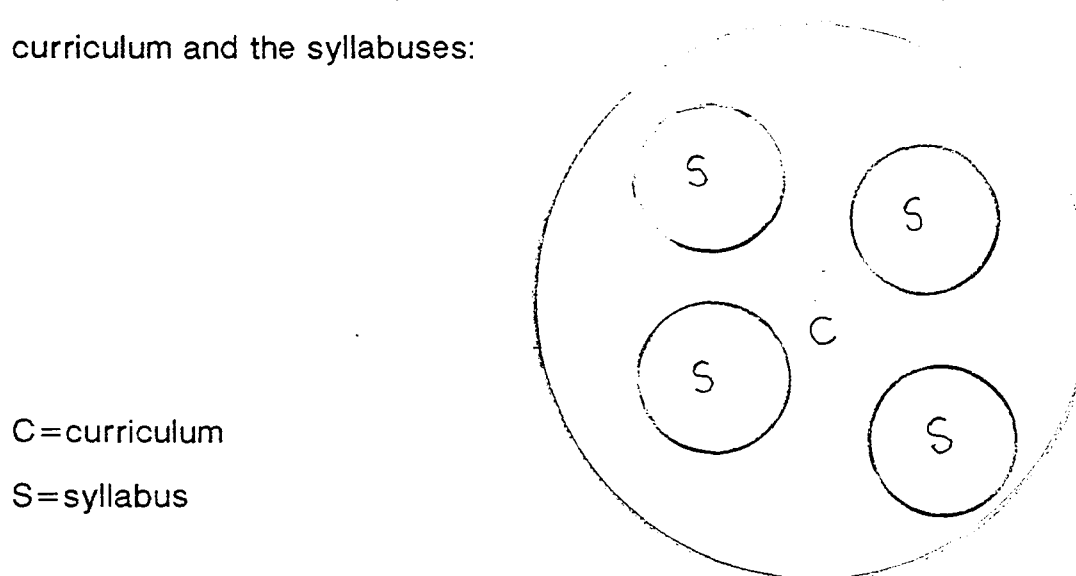


Fig. 2. Diagram showing the relationship between "curriculum" and "syllabus"

## Definition of Scope

Before I proceed to Chapter 1, it is necessary for me to draw a boundary around my discussion. The boundary includes the following:

First, it is important to clarify my own role in HKU, and the perspective I adopt in this thesis. I have been teaching in the English Centre since 1985 and am mainly responsible for teaching EAS courses. Although I believe that the curriculum I propose here could be enacted in the English Centre, I have no control over the curriculum development in the English Department. This limitation on my part imposes a very significant constraint on the way I construct the proposed curriculum. As one of the major purposes of the proposed curriculum is to enable students to function more effectively in their studies in the English Department, my curriculum depends very much on that of the English Department. The curriculum I propose in this thesis is based on the present situation in the English Department. But one possible danger, and a very serious one, is that if the curriculum in the English Department changes, then my proposed curriculum will become outdated very soon. Flexibility in my proposed curriculum is therefore very important. To safeguard against this danger, I write this thesis with the following concept in mind: assuming that the English Department continues to teach literature, and requires its students to read their texts in English as well as write their papers and examination answers in English, even if the literary materials it selects and the method of teaching change, my proposed curriculum will still have value as it emphasizes not so much content but method--it teaches students not only to read and write about individual pieces of literary works, but how to read and write about literature. If the curriculum in the English Department changes, alterations within my proposed curriculum can also be made accordingly, but the principles remain the same.

The course I am proposing, however, is not to be regarded totally as a service course, a supplementary tag-on to ILSE offered by the English Department. It is an independent course as well in two senses: first, it teaches what ILSE does not teach, i.e., ways of reading literature, and ways of writing about literature; second, it expands students' horizons in literary studies by introducing students to literary theory that is not discussed in ILSE, and by using literary materials other than those used ILSE.

Secondly, although the syllabus described in Chapter 6 of this thesis was implemented in a class during the academic year 1996-1997, this thesis is not to be considered an empirical piece of work which tries to prove its points by providing empirical data. The data and analysis which are included in Chapter 6 are there to show how needs were identified, and how the module was assessed. It is not meant to be a full-fledged study which would probably have involved the use of multiple research methods such as interviewing, classroom observation, content analysis of student essays, etc. on top of an end-of-term questionnaire survey. (Asking students to fill in a questionnaire at the end of a term is the standard way used for course evaluation in HKU.) Instead, the study is essentially theoretical in nature: what I intend to do is to argue for the necessity for curriculum renewal by examining the socio-political situation in Hong Kong, as well as curricular development in HKU, and to design a new curriculum which is built on curriculum, literary, and writing theories.

Thirdly, although the module could easily lend itself to the teaching of all four skills, the study focuses on reading and writing. There are two reasons for limiting my discussion to these two skills: first, the EAS course, although it purports to teach several skills (see 1.2.4), has always given top priority to reading and writing, as this has been seen by language teachers to be areas where students need the greatest amount of instruction. Second, as this study

aims at helping students to cope with their studies in the English Department, and as the English Department assesses its students by looking at how well they read and write about literature (as shown in essays they write during term time and in the final examination), my emphasis on these skills is not only justified, but also practical.

Fourthly, the study is not an attempt at discussing the advantages and disadvantages of using literature in the language classroom. The teaching of English literature is an institutional reality in HKU: "English Literature" is offered as a subject and a major. Students doing the proposed module are taking, and will possibly continue to take, literature courses in the English Department. The module is an attempt to help students to become more effective learners in their discipline.

Lastly, it is necessary to make a distinction between two related concepts: the teaching of literature and the teaching of language through literature. Maley (1989) calls the first the study of literature, and the second the use of literature as a resource for language learning. The aim of the first type of pedagogy is to enable students to understand and appreciate literature, and perhaps also to pass examinations, a tradition represented by pedagogues such as Moody (1979), and Brooks, Purser, and Warren (1975). The purpose of the second type of pedagogy is to enable students to acquire language skills through the use of literary texts, a recent trend in language teaching: its advocates include Walker (1983), Povey (1984), Carter and Long (1987), Collie and Slater (1987), Maley and Duff (1989), and Lazar (1993). My study incorporates the aims of these pedagogies: its purpose is to teach literature; but since it emphasizes reading and writing, a natural consequence is that students will acquire language skills.

Reference to the difference H.G. Widdowson (1984) makes between the "study" and the "learning" of literature will further clarify my aim in this study. He explains the difference between the two concepts in this way:

By study I mean enquiry without implication of performance, the pursuit of knowledge about something by some kind of rational or intuitive enquiry, something, therefore, which is given separate third person status. By learning I mean getting to know how to do something as an involved first-person performer. Study, in this sense, is action which leads to knowledge and extends awareness, whereas learning is knowledge which leads to action and develops proficiency (p.184).

H.G. Widdowson concludes his article by saying:

I have argued in this paper that the task for literature teaching is to perform literature as readers, to interpret it as a use of language, as a precondition of studying it... literature learning, if you like, precludes not precludes literature study (p.194).

My notion of literature teaching in this thesis includes both "learning" and "studying," in that order.

## **Summary**

In this introductory section of the thesis, I have explained the background reasons that have led to the undertaking of this study, stated the purpose of this research, described the structure of the thesis, defined some of the terms in the title of the thesis, as well as drawn parameters around my research.



## Endnotes to Introduction

1. It is difficult to pinpoint whether an academic milieu such as that of the University of Hong Kong is an ESL or EFL context. The difficulty stems from two major sources: first, as will be explained more clearly in Chapter 1 of this thesis, Hong Kong is now going through a transitional period in its historical development. For almost a century, it was a colony of Britain, and English has therefore played a very important role in the society: for many years, it was the official language, the medium of instruction in schools, the language used in government documents, legal procedures, and all kinds of commercial settings. But in less than a few months' time, Hong Kong is to revert to Chinese rule, and Chinese will play a much more prominent role than it does now. Second, although the medium of instruction in the University of Hong Kong is English, and students are required to use English in tutorials to participate in discussions, in writing papers, and in examinations, it is Chinese (Cantonese) that they use when they converse with each other outside classrooms, and when they run student activities. English, then, is the language they need in order to pass examinations and eventually, to obtain their degrees, but it is not the language they use to communicate with each other or with the outside world. I have therefore chosen to use the hybrid "ESL/EFL" to describe the context in Hong Kong.
2. The English Centre, which was originally a section within the Language Centre, became "independent" in July, 1992. It is a service unit within the University of Hong Kong and is responsible for teaching EAP courses to first year, and some second and third year students. Unlike the English Department, the English Centre is not a part of the Arts Faculty. See 1.2.4 for a more detailed description of the courses run by the English Centre.
3. The fact that the EAS course is non-credit bearing plays a small but indispensable part in my call for curriculum renewal. This point is explained

in 1.3.1. and 5.2.2.

4. The terms "curriculum" and "syllabus," as they are used in this thesis, are explained in "Definition of Terms."
5. I wish to thank my colleague Dr. Cynthia Lee for giving me this idea.
6. Throughout this thesis, I use "he" and "him" to refer to both males and females, unless the gender of the person mentioned is being specified.
7. Chen Rouxi grew up in Taiwan; after having completed her university education there, she returned to Mainland China during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). She left the Mainland in the early 1970s, feeling disillusioned about the Communist regime, and later on emigrated to the United States. Her earlier works (a novel and a series of short stories) were written when she was in Asia (about her experience in China), and her later works (mainly fiction) were produced during her residence in the United States; most of these works are about the experience of Chinese people in America.
8. Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Japan and went to Britain when he was five.
9. Wu Lihua grew up in Taiwan and went to the United States for postgraduate studies, and then settled down there. All her works (a series of novels about Chinese in America) were written in the United States.

# PART I: RENEWING THE CURRICULUM

## CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND

### AND REASONS FOR CURRICULUM RENEWAL

#### 1.1. Introduction

My call for curriculum renewal is based on first, an assessment of the current "English for Arts" (EAS) course, which I find to be unsatisfactory and not suitable for our students; and second, an examination of the wider socio-political factors that have been in the past 15 years, and are at present, affecting the Hong Kong society on all levels.

The theoretical framework that I borrow here is one that has been put forward by Clark (1987), which is based on Skilbeck's (1982) model. The main thrust of Clark's argument is that, in designing a foreign language curriculum, it is important to look beyond the school system, to the wider context of society. He makes this point very explicitly at the outset of his book *Curriculum Renewal in School Foreign Language Learning* (1987). He points out that:

... a language curriculum is a function of the interrelationships that hold between subject-specific concerns and other broader factors embracing socio-political and philosophical matters, educational value systems, theory and practice in curriculum, design, teacher experiential wisdom and learner motivation. In order to understand the foreign language curriculum in any particular context, it is therefore necessary to attempt to understand how all the various influences interrelate to give a particular shape to the planning and execution of the teaching/learning process (p.xii).

In light of the line of argument I am taking, it is essential for me to give an overview of Hong Kong: its geographical and historical contexts; the socio-political situation it is presently in; its educational system, especially the University of Hong Kong (HKU); and its language context, in particular, the teaching of English at HKU. Such information will serve as the background against which my arguments for curriculum renewal will be presented, in the second half of this chapter.

## **1.2. Background**

### **1.2.1. The Geographical Context**

Hong Kong has a total land area of 1,070 sq km, and is composed of four main areas: Hong Kong Island on the south of the harbor; Kowloon; the New Territories on the north of the harbor; and the Outer Islands (Kwok, 1991:1) (see maps in Appendix 1). Hong Kong Island covers 78 sq km, about 7% of Hong Kong's total land area. Kowloon is a peninsula, and is a mere 12 sq km. North of Boundary Street is New Kowloon, which is part of the New Territories. It lies north of Kowloon and south of the Chinese border, and covers a land area of 980 sq km, making up 91% of Hong Kong's land area. As for the Outer Islands, there are 253 of these; the largest, Lantau Island, is twice the size of Hong Kong Island (F. Kaplan, 1991:23).

### **1.2.2. The Historical Context**

For many centuries, Hong Kong had been a part of China. In 1842, as a result of the First Opium War, the Island of Hong Kong was ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Nanjing (1). In 1860, as a consequence of the Second Opium War, the southern part of Kowloon Peninsula, together with Stonecutter's Island, was ceded to Britain by the Beijing Treaty (2). About 40 years later, in 1898, New Kowloon (north of Boundary Street), the New Territories, and 253 outlying islands, were leased to Britain for 99 years (3). These treaties were later

termed "unequal" by China, but their legitimacy was for a century unquestioned, not until 1972 (Chiu, 1972).

In 1972, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was admitted into the United Nations, it indicated that it would not recognize the legality of the treaties that turned Hong Kong to the British as a colony. In 1979, Deng Xiaoping, then Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission, was reported to have told Murray Maclehorse, the then governor of Hong Kong, that China would take back Hong Kong before 1997 (Chiu, 1992:4-5). In September, 1982, when British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher visited Beijing, it was made known to her that China intends to resume her sovereignty over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997. The two governments then entered several rounds of negotiation, which resulted in an agreement in 1984, known as the Sino-British Joint Declaration (Ching, 1985:11-12). The "Declaration" outlines the basic policies regarding the way the Chinese government will exercise sovereignty over Hong Kong in and after 1997. The essential aspects, paraphrased by Kwok (1991:2), include the following:

- a) Hong Kong is to become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China;
- b) China, using the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, will allow Hong Kong to enjoy a high degree of autonomy, except in the matters of defense and foreign affairs;
- c) The socialist system will not be practiced in Hong Kong; the existing capitalist system and way of life will remain unchanged for 50 years;
- d) The Chief Executive will be selected from among Hong Kong citizens by election or through consultation and will be accountable to the legislature;
- e) The legislature will be constituted by elections (again, only Hong Kong citizens will be elected; thus fulfilling the "Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong" principle);
- f) The existing judicial system in Hong Kong will remain unchanged with the

power of final adjudication added to it.

Soon after the signing of the Joint Declaration, the focus of attention was turned to the drafting of the "Basic Law," which is to be Hong Kong's "mini constitution." It defines the respective authorities of the central government in Beijing and that of the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the political system of the HKSAR, and the rights and obligations of the citizens of Hong Kong. The "Basic Law" was completed and published in February, 1990 (Sida, 1994:240). One significant social phenomenon in Hong Kong throughout the 1980s and the early years of the 1990s was emigration out of the territory to other countries (Segal, 1993:64). The Hong Kong Government does not release statistics on emigration, but those who wish to emigrate to another country must obtain a certificate of "no criminal record" or a "good citizen certificate" issued by the police (Sida, 1994:269). In 1980, the number of certificates issued was 16,273; in 1984, 23,002; in 1987, 53,000; in 1988, 48,000, (Weng, 1988:83), and after the "Tiananmen Square Incident" on June 4, 1989, in which thousands of university student were massacred in one night as a result of the Chinese Government's determination to stamp out a democracy movement (Yi and Thompson, 1989), the figure soared to an all-time high of 62,000 (Official Hong Kong Government Estimates of Emigration (1980-1991), produced by the Hong Kong Government Secretariat). Emigration continued through the years leading up to 1997 (Skeldon, 1995:58-63).

In terms of total numbers, an average of 30 to 40 thousand emigrants per year was not very significant, in light of the fact that the total population of Hong Kong is around six million. But the emigration process has great significance when one looks at the kinds of people who choose to leave the territory. Most of these emigrants opt to go to the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, New Zealand,

and Singapore (Skeldon, 1995:58-63). These countries select their potential residents on two bases: they pick those who are "skilled" or possess "techniques" their country need, such as medical and legal personnel, managers, accountants, computer technicians, teachers, etc. which led to a phenomenon which has come to be known as "brain drain" (Emmons, 1991:17); and second, those who have entrepreneurial investment potentials, resulting, of course, in the outflow of capital out of the territory (Chiu, 1993:19). Viewed this way, the emigration process has negative effects on Hong Kong society as a whole: it has taken away from Hong Kong valuable manpower as well as financial resources. This process, in turn, affects the student population of HKU, which contributes to the necessity for curriculum change. This point is discussed in 1.3.2.

The major factor that has led to the exodus is the lack of confidence on the part of the people of Hong Kong in the Chinese Communist regime. China, in the past 45 years, has had a notorious record of inflicting suffering on its people (Sida, 1994:271). More than 40% of the current population in Hong Kong are refugees from Mainland China (Skeldon, 1995:114), who could not tolerate its system and its way of life. Many still remember the hardship they suffered in China: for example, during the decade-long Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), thousands of people were humiliated, ostracized, imprisoned, killed (Lee, 1978). Before and after the Revolution, there were also many political movements that disturbed the livelihood of the populace, broke up families, disrupted education, sent massive numbers into the countryside or into exile, and which led to rampant poverty in general (Garside, 1981). Many people in Hong Kong are worried that they might be subjected to the same ordeals when the territories revert to Chinese rule in 1997, and hence the exodus to other countries (4).

### 1.2.3. The Educational Context

The educational system in Hong Kong encompasses kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools (including technical and prevocational schools), technical institutes, and tertiary institutions. All children are required by law to be in full-time education between the ages of six and 15 (Hong Kong Report, 1996:131).

Most children begin their preschool education at the age of three in the kindergarten. At the age of six, they enter primary school, which lasts six years. At about 12, children progress to a three-year junior education at a grammar, prevocational, or technical school. After Secondary 3, they can choose to go to a two-year senior secondary course, which leads to the first public examination, the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). Others opt to enroll in a full-time craft course or vocational training; still others (a small number) leave formal education at this point. (Hong Kong Report, 1996:131).

For those who pass the HKCEE and opt for further education, they have two major choices: they can enroll in two or three-year vocational courses of teacher training; or in a two-year sixth form course leading to the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). Based on the results of the HKALE, students may gain a place on a degree or diploma course in one of the ten post-secondary institutions (Hong Kong Report, 1996:131).

#### The University of Hong Kong

The University of Hong Kong (HKU), the oldest university in the territory, was founded in 1911 (Mellor, 1980). After more than 80 years of development, it now has nine faculties (Architecture, Arts, Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Science, and Social Sciences), and a student population of



around 13,500, including undergraduate and postgraduates (Postgraduate Prospectus, HKU, 1996-1997).

### The English Department

The English Department was not set up until after the Second World War (Calendar, HKU, 1946-1947). Before that, "English" was offered as a subject in the Faculty of Arts under the grouping of "Philosophy and Letters" (Harrison, 1962b:131). In 1975, the English Department merged with the Department of European Languages to form the Department of English and Comparative Literature (Calendar, HKU, 1975-1976). In 1989, the two departments were separated (Calendar, HKU, 1989-1990). At present, the English Department teaches British literature, American literature, and Literatures in English (see "Definition of Terms" in "Introduction") and Linguistics.

### The English Centre

The English Centre was originally a section within the Language Centre, and became "independent" in July, 1992 (Director's Report, 1993, English Centre, HKU). It is a service unit within the University and is responsible for teaching EAP courses to first-year, as well as some second and third year students. It also offers short intensive language courses in the summer, and runs workshops for postgraduate students throughout the year (Director's Report, 1996, English Centre, HKU).

#### **1.2.4. The Language Context**

About 98% of the population in Hong Kong speak Chinese (Cantonese) as their native tongue (Hong Kong Report, 1995:48). But English is the major language of government, education, and business. It is also widely used in the media, tourism, and the arts (Richards et al. 1992).

### The Teaching of English in Hong Kong

English is a compulsory school subject starting from Primary One. Chinese is used as the medium of instruction in most of the primary schools in Hong Kong. English is taught as a subject; the amount of English taught, however, varies from school to school (Hong Kong Report, 1995:160).

The situation in secondary schools is much more complicated. Besides the English Foundation schools and the various international schools set up by different national groups (e.g., Americans, French, German-Swiss, Japanese, Singaporeans), to educate their youth, there are about 400 local secondary schools in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Report, 1995:161). In 1994, the Education Department divided schools into three types, depending on the language abilities of the students: 15% use English entirely (except for Chinese Language, Chinese Literature, and Chinese History lessons); 50% use a mixture of both languages; and 35% use Chinese only (except for English classes) (Ho, 1995, p.x). Almost 100% of the students who come to HKU have graduated from the first two types of school. Among these 400 odd schools, only 27 of them offer "English Literature" as a subject (Ho, 1995).

### The Teaching of English in HKU

English language courses for first-year students are run by the English Centre. It offers EAP courses to all nine faculties within the University (Director's Report, 1996, English Centre, HKU). Among them, the "English for Arts Students" (EAS) (and its earlier versions) has the longest history: Since the founding of the University to 1911, it was offered by the English Department (Calendar, 1913-1954, HKU). The course included both literature and language (i.e., grammar, reading, writing, and speaking skills). In 1955, the course was divided into two separate courses: "English Literature" and "English Language" (Calendar, 1995, HKU). Between 1972-1991, the EAS course was run by the

English division of the Language Centre. It was a remedial course required of students who were identified as "weak" in a diagnostic test they took when they first entered the University (Director's Report, 1973, Language Centre, HKU).

From 1992 onwards, EAS has been in the hands of the English Centre, and has become an "enhancement" course required of all first year students in the Arts Faculty (Director's Report, 1993, English Centre, HKU). That EAS shifted from a remedial course required of some students to an enhancement course required of all students was an important change. This shift, made after careful consideration and much research (Director's Report, 1993, English Centre, HKU) indicates that the University Administration was concerned about students' falling standards of English. This point has been explained in 1.2.4, and will be further elaborated in 1.3.3.

### **1.3. Reasons for Curriculum Renewal**

Having provided an overview of Hong Kong, I now go on to present the reasons why I think curriculum renewal is needed at this stage of the development of HKU. My contention will be developed along five lines of argument. The first is concerned with the current EAS course; the second and third are closely connected: they have to do with the changes in the student population in HKU, and the decline of the standards of English among them; the fourth is related to British colonialism and the way English literature is taught overseas; in the light of this argument, I contend, fifthly, that it is judicious to look at other ex-British colonies that had gone through decolonization; and I have chosen to study the case of Malaysia.

#### **1.3.1. The current "English for Arts Students" course**

The EAS course is taught to about 500 first-year Arts Faculty students, who are placed into small groups of 15-16. Since the course became an "enhancement"

course in September, 1992, the EAS course team has experimented with two approaches. Between 1992 and 1994, they produced a course book with many structured exercises. (See Appendix 2a for a description of the course and 2b for examples of the exercises). In Autumn, 1994, they swung to the other extreme and gave students maximum flexibility in choosing what they would like to do in the course. (See Appendix 2c for a description of the aims of the course).

I find neither of these approaches entirely satisfactory. Although the first approach has its merits--it has clear aims, presents concepts systematically, and attempts to reinforce these concepts by providing students with exercises, yet, it suffers from several drawbacks:

First, it is too ambitious: it tries to do too much within a 48 hour course. Instead of focusing on one or two language skills, it attempts to teach students how to become independent learners (Unit 1), how to study (Unit 2), how to do research (Unit 3), how to give oral presentations (Unit 4), how to write academic essays (Unit 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10), and even how to use a computer software program (Unit 1). As there is limited time, all these skills can only be taught in a half-hearted manner. Second, although the concepts discussed in Units 5 through 10 are useful, the ways they are presented are too simplistic for our students; I think the writers of the handbook pitched too low.

Third, the course book is reminiscent of workbooks students had used in their junior forms in secondary school. It contains extremely detailed instructions, grids and blanks to be filled in, and color-coded chapters. As the EAS courses is a non-credit bearing course, (see Footnote 1 in "Introduction"), the rather childish appearance of the book only reinforces students' perception of the course as trivial, unimportant, and having low status, inferior to the

"degree" courses they take in their own faculty. This seemingly unimportant point could in fact undermine students' motivation (to do well in the course) and in turn affect their learning attitude. Motivation as a factor for renewing the curriculum will be discussed further in Chapter 5 and 6. Fourth, the detailed instructions and myriad number of tasks leave little room for the teacher to develop his own teaching style, or to alter certain materials in order to make the course more relevant to particular groups of students.

The second approach does not have the above drawbacks as it does not have a definite structure. Both the teachers and students are given a great deal of freedom; yet this poses two kinds of problems: For the new teacher, there is nothing to follow; he simply plans from day to day. For the students, although the flexibility and autonomy are much welcomed, the excessive freedom could result in confusion and a sense of loss. Having just come through a 13-year educational process which emphasizes spoonfeeding, rote learning, and teaching to prepare for examinations--which encourage obedience, conformity "getting the right answers," rather than imagination, creativity, and exercise of critical thinking--first-year students in their first term in the University need to be taught how to be independent learners first before they can become independent thinkers (5).

Furthermore, without concrete teaching points, it is difficult for students to monitor their own progress; they cannot verbalize what they have learned at the end of the academic year except that they have done three projects, and have practiced speaking and writing some English. Related to this last problem is one that has to do with the final examination. Students are required to take a final test at the end of the academic year. But if the course does not have a syllabus or concrete teaching points, how can students prepare for it? And what does the test measure--aptitude, proficiency, or achievement?

What is needed, I believe, is a balance between the two extreme approaches: the course should have a sharper focus and should be content-based. My proposal is that the first term be devoted to the teaching of writing skills, and the second to helping students to read and write about a content area. I propose six modules, corresponding to the major subjects in the Arts Faculty--Art History, English (and Comparative literature), Geography, History, Music, and Philosophy.

My second, third, fourth, and fifth arguments go beyond curricular concerns to wider socio-political factors that contribute to my call for curriculum renewal. On July 1, 1997, Hong Kong will revert to Chinese rule, and the history of Hong Kong as a British colony is coming to an end. Its educational system will undergo certain changes, and the literature curricula in universities will inevitably be affected.

### **1.3.2. Changes in the Student Population in the University of Hong Kong**

When HKU was established in 1911, one of the aims of the founding fathers, as Norman Henderson (1968) pointed out, was to impart a knowledge of western culture (in particular, British ideas) to Chinese students. The Arts Faculty, within which the English Department was housed, was charged with the specific responsibility of training two types of personnel (Harrison, 1962b:128): civil servants who would consolidate the bureaucratic system, and teachers who would enter the school system to impart "correct" values to the younger generation. Within this context, the English Department had an important role to play, as the subject it taught--English Literature--has an explicitly "British" content, both in terms of subject matter and language. Students in this department studied the English language, as well as the literature of Britain, and through her literature, the history, culture, values, and manners etc. of

Britain, Hong Kong's "adopted mother" (Fung, 1977:205; Fong, 1991:227). During this period, teaching students to read and write about literature was not emphasized (not needed) because those who came to the University to major in English were adequately prepared to study the subject (Yau, 1992:58). Most of them came from middle-class families and were educated in the so-called "elite" schools. These schools included several government colleges as well as a handful of "Anglo-Chinese" schools founded and run by Catholic and Protestant churches (So, 1992:71). These schools operated according to British or European models. The medium of instruction, except for Chinese Literature and Chinese History classes, was English. Students in the "Arts" stream were introduced to the "great" works in English Literature canon early on in their secondary school education, and went on to take "English Literature" as a subject in the HKCEE and HKALE examinations (see 1.2.3); and some, when they came to HKU, became English majors. When they arrived in university, they could communicate effectively in English, had read a number of "great" works, were familiar with the "techniques" of analyzing and critiquing literary works, and had written a number of "critical" essays. Because they were well prepared, lecturers did not have to spend time on teaching their students how to read or write about literature. There was no need to do so (6).

Hong Kong in the 1990s is a very different society. It has undergone a number of changes in the 1980s when the Chinese and the British governments entered the first round of talks to discuss the future of Hong Kong, and made the "Joint Declaration" in 1984. (See 1.2.2.) The emigration process that followed (documented in 1.2.2) changed the population in Hong Kong, and has brought about rather drastic changes in HKU. As has been explained earlier in this section, before the 1980s, the majority of the students who entered HKU were from wealthy and middle class families and have graduated from the top 15-20

schools in the territory. But the emigration process, which led to the departure of many of the wealthy class and professionals, also meant that the children of these families, who would otherwise have chosen to come to HKU, now opt for a university education overseas (Students' Union, HKU, 1986:159-162). As a result of this, many places in HKU have become available to students from the "non-elite" schools and who come from less wealthy families. The parents of many of these students are blue-collar workers who have received no more than a primary education. They live in environments where English is not often heard or used. The only place where English is acquired is at school. (See 1.2.3). This point is substantiated by figures provided by the Office of Student Affairs at HKU, which conducts surveys on freshmen every year. Between 1985-1995, for example, the average percentage of students coming from public housing estates is around 40%; only 29% have their own room and their desk at home; and 44% of their fathers and 55% of their mothers had either no formal schooling or only primary school education.

This phenomenon was also described by two leading educationalists in Hong Kong, Wang Gungwu, the vice-chancellor of HKU from 1986-1995, and Cheng Kai Ming, the Dean of the Faculty of Education at HKU from 1992-1996. In an interview with Felix Cheng (1995:1), Wang commented on the changes in the HKU student population over the last four decades; he said,

HKU was the only place in the 1960s and 1970s for the best students from the middle class. In the early days, only the very rich could afford to send their children to study abroad. This is no longer the case in the 1980s.

Wang, a historian himself, went on to give three reasons that may have



accounted for this change: first, because of the economic success of Hong Kong and the rise of an affluent middle class, more students from the middle class were sent by their parents to an overseas university. Second, as part of the localization of the civil service, as an attempt to encourage local Chinese to remain in the civil service after 1997, the Hong Kong Government offers overseas education allowances to civil servants. Third, the expansion of education at the primary school level finally has an effect on the University in the 1990s; according to Wang,

The education structure in primary and secondary schools has something to do with [the change in the student population in HKU]. The sudden expansion in the late 1970s, of universal free nine years education came without adequate preparation. The results were not felt until 12 year later. The abolition of secondary school examinations was not helpful... The changes in the student intake mean that they are no longer from the 50 or so famous well-established schools from which HKU used to draw its students. Instead, the undergraduates now come from over 300 schools, most of them newly established. Perhaps each new school would produce a couple of students who have few friends with whom to start their university life. Most of these students are not prepared for university, and need more help than their predecessors" (F. Cheng, 1995:1-2).

Wang's observation, that students entering HKU are not as academically competent as their predecessors, is echoed by K.M. Cheng. In an article he wrote for the *The Other Hong Kong Report, 1995*, he made the following comments:

Over the years, there was a general outcry about the decline in the quality of school education. Although official documents never admit there has been a decline there is a general feeling across all sectors of the society that student standards are ever declining. The most significant aspect of the decline refers to the language standards in both Chinese and English. However, there is also the general complaint that students admitted to universities are substandard in almost all aspects of their academic performance. Employers expressed their silent dissatisfaction by placing their preference to graduates from the Chinese Mainland over local graduates from Hong Kong. Students and parents also demonstrated their distrust in the local education system when more and more bright students go for overseas studies, yet at increasingly earlier ages (K.M. Cheng, 1995:456).

Besides being less academically prepared for university and having lower language standards than their predecessors, I further contend that, due to the family and school backgrounds that the present generation of student come from, they also have less exposure to Western culture, and hence also possess less "literary competence" (in English literature) (7) and therefore are less prepared to study English literature--than their predecessors.

### **1.3.3. Decline of English Standards among Students in the University of Hong Kong**

My third argument has to do with the decline of English standards. In 1.3.2, I made reference to the decline of the quality of education in Hong Kong society as a whole (F. Cheng, 1995; K.M. Cheng, 1995), and specifically the decline in language standards, both Chinese and English, among university students

(K.M. Cheng, 1995). This phenomenon has been widely discussed and documented since the early 1990s (8). But there are others who disagree with this observation. Ho Kwok Keung (1994), for example, argues vehemently that talks about the decline of English standards is a myth, an illusion. His argument is: in the 1960s, only 1% of the same age group (18-22) in the Hong Kong population could enter university; but now, in the 1990s, about 18% are admitted to universities. Naturally, Ho continues, if one compares these two groups of students, one will see a decline of standards; but, if one compares the top 1% of the present student population with that of the 1960s, then the difference is insignificant. Ho's contention seems logical and could be right. But the fact remains that the other 17% are in universities now and need to be educated. The curricula within the universities have to be adjusted to accommodate the needs of these students.

Within HKU, the contention that English standards among students have declined could perhaps be more easily substantiated. I present three pieces of evidence to support this claim, one that I myself endorse. The first piece of evidence is the increasing number of students who are required to enroll in the EAS course. As I have discussed in 1.2.4., EAS had evolved from a "remedial" course for "weak" students to an "enhancement" course for all students. The decision to alter the nature of the course (on the part of the University Administration) was by no means abrupt, made on the spur of the moment in response to a phenomenon; rather, it was based on a careful observation that the need for English instruction had increased over the years. In 1972, the first year when the remedial course was offered, about 30% of first year students in the Arts Faculty, after having taken a diagnosis test, were required to take the course (Director's Report, 1973, Language Centre, HKU); by 1988, the percentage rose to about 85; and by 1990, 92. It was decided in 1991 that the diagnosis test should be abandoned. It seemed no longer justified to

administer the test, which was a huge annual undertaking that involved enormous preparation as well as manpower, only to exempt a mere 5 to 8% of students from taking the course. It was decided that all students admitted in the fall of 1992 would be required to take EAS.

The second piece of evidence is based on a recent piece of research undertaken by the English Centre (1995). The project, entitled LEAP (Learning Experience And Proficiency of Students Entering Tertiary Education in Hong Kong) was aimed at "gathering information about the English language ability and experiences of students who enter tertiary education in Hong Kong" (LEAP, 1995). The researchers reported that the teachers who were interviewed believe that:

[t]he English language ability of many students are not up to an acceptable standard. Spoken and written English; sentence structure; and vocabulary are particularly weak. Many think that the overall standard has been declining in recent years, and poor English, low motivation, and lack of confidence have formed a vicious cycle in students' English learning process.

A third piece of evidence concerns the increasing number of courses that are run by the English Centre (Director's Report, 1992-1996, English Centre, HKU). Over the past five years or so, more and more courses are offered to students beyond the first year (often at the requests of faculties). For example, a second year English language course became an additional requirement for Business Administration students in 1993; a series of writing workshops were run for postgraduates, starting in 1994; short professional English courses ("Resume Writing and Interviews in English," "English for the Workplace,") were offered during the summer or/and between term times, and were open to non

first-year students (Director's Report, 1994, 1995, 1996, English Centre, HKU).

#### **1.3.4. British Colonialism and the Teaching of English Literature Overseas**

My fourth argument concerns models of English literature teaching. I attempt to show that the way English literature has been taught in HKU for the last 80 years or so will have to change because the colonial period is coming to an end, and that a new model is needed to replace it. I shall do this by first referring to two ways English literature was/is taught outside Britain.

According to Press (1963), the teaching of English literature outside Britain followed two traditions. In the first tradition, the British way of teaching the subject was exported to her colonies mainly through two channels: British examinations taken overseas, and British-trained teachers and inspectors, who operated on the assumption that "what was believed to be right for Britain (especially anything which concerned the English language) would also be valuable overseas" (Press, 1963:13). The influence of such teaching was especially obvious in the field of teacher training. A former principal of Achimota (in the former Gold Coast) made this remark in 1937: "The curriculum in an African secondary school or college corresponds to that just out of date in England" (Press, 1963:13).

But, as Press (1963) points out, the geographical area to be affected most was India rather than the African continent. He explains this phenomenon in clear, succinct terms:

In the early nineteenth century the whole concept of "English Literature" in India was intimately bound up with an expressed belief in the values of English literature. The official acceptance of Macaulay's minute refers specifically to "imparting the native population a knowledge of English

literature and science through the medium of English language." This involved no narrow view of literature but referred quite clearly to the more catholic concept, embracing philosophy, political economy, law, poetry, and history as evidences of civilization, which was generally accepted in the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries. The function of English in Imperial education was frequently seen as comparable to that traditionally assigned to Greek or Latin in Europe--a vision which persisted until quite recent times. It was a concept of Western culture and civilization described in English rather than of English literature in terms of set books (p.14).

As a result of this belief, the English literature curriculum in colonial India consisted almost exclusively of texts written by British authors. Narasimhaiah (1993), professor of English at the University of Hyderabad, recalls his experience as a student of English literature before India's independence in 1947; he says,

I remember that when I left the university with an honors degree in 1942, English studies stopped with Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne in poetry, Hardy in fiction and Matthew Arnold in criticism. It will not be misleading to say this was the general pattern throughout the country (p.16).

Paranjape (1992) paints a broader picture of English literature teaching in India in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. He describes "Teli" (Teaching English literature in India) in the earlier days as "a handmaiden of the cultural and educational interests of [British] Empire" (p.51), and goes on to say that most of the teaching staff then were Europeans, and the syllabuses and

curricula were "imitations of what prevailed in British universities" (p.52).

Not just the syllabuses, some of the characteristics of British university examinations were transplanted to India as well: the emphasis was on a limited number of set books, with a range of stylized questions on "characters" and "characteristics" (Press, 1963). A review of the calendars of HKU up the early 1980s shows that such features also characterized the way English literature was taught in this university (see Appendix 3a).

Quite different from the approach of teaching English literature in the British colonies is another tradition seen in Continental Europe. Within this system, English literature is studied as legacies of a foreign culture and civilization. The students there already possess a good knowledge of their own national literature. The teaching of English literature may be in English or in the students' mother tongue. In European countries, the teaching of English literature takes place within the countries' national educational systems. Hence, the influence of the British-type examinations and that of British-trained teachers is much more limited-- compared to the kind of influence they exert in the commonwealth countries. Since the educational values ascribed to general literary studies have been obtained from the national language, English literature is often studied to enhance students' ability to use the English language, and a foreign literature to be acquainted with and appreciated (Press, 1963).

This approach certainly characterizes the ways English literature is taught in other countries outside Europe as well, in, for example, modern China. In China, literary materials are often used in textbooks written for university English language classes. As M. Cheng (1987) points out, unlike other places where there is a need to campaign for the inclusion of literature in ESL classes,

literature has always occupied an important position in the Chinese English language classroom at the tertiary level. This pedagogical tendency is explained by Scovel (1983:86-87):

There is a strong classical and literary heritage in China, nurtured by two millenia of Confucian educational practice, fortified by the emphasis placed on literature by the Europeans and Americans who introduced the teaching of Western languages to China during the past two centuries.

Secondly, English literature is also studied as a "foreign" literature--the literature student's (and perhaps more importantly, the teacher's) starting point, as well as his point of reference, is Chinese culture; and the perspective being adopted is that of a Chinese looking at English literature. This concept is demonstrated in at least three ways: 1) In the production of textbooks that are specifically written for Chinese students. Two widely used textbooks in China are *A History of English Literature* (1983) and *Selected Readings in English Literature* (1986), both by Chen Jia. These books interpret English literature in the light of Marxist ideology.

2) In comparative literature classes, where English texts are compared to Chinese texts, with the latter as the basis (9).

3) In allowing, sometimes encouraging, students to write literary criticism in Chinese (10).

As for Hong Kong, for almost a century, the first approach has dominated the teaching of English literature in HKU. The syllabuses in the English literature curriculum up to the 1980s contained almost exclusively works by "British" writers. (See Appendix 3a). With the approach of 1997, and the end of British colonial rule in Hong Kong, however, it seems only logical that the way English



literature is taught should move closer to the second approach, and the Chinese model.

Although I believe that the way English literature will be taught in the post 1997 era in Hong Kong will be more similar to the way it is taught in China, it will not, I contend, be completely the same, not at least for a period of time. In at least three ways, the situation in Hong Kong is different from that in China. First, Hong Kong has been a British colony for more than a hundred years and has been deeply influenced by British culture. Even if it is to return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, it is likely that it will go through a process of decolonization, enter into a post-colonial, and perhaps neo-colonial, or even anti-colonial period. During this process and these periods, there are bound to be changes in the way English literature is taught. These are experiences that China has never and will not experience. I contend therefore, that while Hong Kong will become more "Chinese," it will not be as "Chinese" as China in a short period of time. Second, our students in Hong Kong have never had as much instruction in Chinese language, literature, history, culture, and citizenship education as their counterparts in China (11). They will not find it as easy to look at a piece of English literature from a "Chinese" perspective or to verbalize their responses to English literature in Chinese as their counterparts in China.

Third, the universities in Hong Kong--or, at least HKU, has indicated its intention to maintain English as the medium of instruction (Wang, 1986:4). It is likely, therefore, that students of English literature in HKU will continue to study the subject in English (instead of translations) and write essays and examination answers in English. It seems to me, then, that the way English literature will be taught in Hong Kong in its immediate post-colonial period will resemble not so much China as other ex-British colonies. It is hence necessary to look to a third approach to the teaching of English literature outside Britain, and this I call the "Former British Colonies" (or FBC) model.

The FBC model represents the way English literature is taught in many former British colonies, where, as they progress into the post-colonial era, teach less "British" literature and more native literatures (either written in English, or in the native tongue/s and is/are translated into English). Examples of such curricular reforms abound: they can be found, for example, in India (Trivedi, 1995), Malaysia (Tatlow, 1982), Singapore (Gopinathan et al, 1994), Kenya (Ngugi, 1972,), Nigeria (Banjo, 1985). Although it seems likely that Hong Kong will follow this trend; it differs from these countries in one important respect: it does not have a corpus of local literature written in English that can be readily incorporated into the literature curriculum. Whereas Africa boasts of such writers as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe; India, R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai; Singapore, Edwin Thumboo, Catherine Lim--Hong Kong has produced no such counterparts, mainly because English has never been a "mother tongue" enough for such prominent writers to emerge. This point is further discussed in Chapter 5, in which I discuss the kinds of literary materials that could be included in my proposed curriculum.

To summarize my argument so far, I have contended that the literature curriculum in Hong Kong needs to be renewed, because as Hong Kong approaches 1997, it will deviate from the "British" model, and is in need therefore of a new approach. The "European" model (which also exemplifies the way literature is taught in China) seems appropriate, but in fact is not--not totally, and not yet--because, although Hong Kong will become a part of China, it is also an ex-British colony. The third approach, the FBC model, offers valuable experience from which Hong Kong can learn, especially in two areas: in terms of introducing literary materials that are closer to students' own cultural background; and in terms of providing students with more language instruction alongside literature instruction. The experience of Malaysia, among that of other former British colonies, has much to offer. In

my last argument, I shall explain why the example of Malaysia is particularly pertinent to Hong Kong.

#### **1.3.5. Learning from others: The University of Malaya**

I conclude this chapter by referring to the curricular reforms in the Department of English at the University of Malaya in the 1970s. Not only do Malaysia and Hong Kong share a number of similarities, there are also resemblances between the University of Malaya (UM) and HKU.

Malaysia became independent in 1957 (Turnbull, 1980), and therefore had undergone the decolonization process that Hong Kong will go through. The experience of Malaysia deserves close study because the country has many similarities to Hong Kong: geographically, both Malaysia and Hong Kong are located in the East Asian region; over the past several centuries, Malaysia had become the permanent home for many Chinese who had chosen to migrate there (Ryan, 1971); about one third of the population of Malaysia is ethnic Chinese (Zin and Lewin, 1995). Historically, both places had been (and Hong Kong still is) colonized by Britain. Socially and culturally, both places had been profoundly influenced by the British, and this influence is particularly obvious in the area of education. The educational system in both places (especially on the secondary and tertiary levels) was/is closely modelled after the English system: five years of secondary schooling, leading to a public examination; two more years of a matriculation course, leading to a university entrance examination, and then three years of university studies, leading to a Bachelor's degree.

I am aware of the differences between the two places as well: while Malaysia became an independent country in 1957, Hong Kong is to revert to Chinese sovereignty and to become a Special Administrative Region of the PRC in 1997

(12). But the similarity I intend to emphasize is that both places ceased (or will soon cease, in the case of Hong Kong) to be British colonies.

Regarding UM and HKU, there are also striking similarities between them: both were founded under British colonial rule in this century, and possibly for similar purposes (one of which was to train locals who would be able to assume leadership positions in their societies-- Lim, 1995:69; also see 1.3.2). Both universities used/use English as a the medium of instruction (13), and taught/teach a heavy duty corpus of "canonical" English literature in the English Department.

In a way, UM is about 30 years ahead of HKU. I will explain this in the light of the curricular changes in the English Department at UM. Kazmi (1982) describes the early years of the English Department in this way:

The English Department set up in 1959 by the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur...appropriately modelled its course on the lines followed by the older British universities at that time, though with a much reduced element of early English language and literature. The primary concern of the Department in its early years was with English Literature, not with Literature in English. British authors from Chaucer to Lawrence, especially poets, dramatists, and novelists, received fairly thorough treatment a that time (p.118).

The description bears much resemblance to the English literature curriculum in HKU before the 1980s as described in 1.3.2.

Kazmi (1982) goes on to report two major curricular changes in the late 1960s

and the early 1970s. The first reform was the introduction of two writing courses: a course called "Professional Report Writing," the aims of which were i) put across to students some elements of grammar and rhetoric, and ii) to hone their written English; another course was one that was modelled after the freshmen English program in American universities. I believe by this he means a course that aims at familiarizing students with the conventions of academic writing, including such concepts as avoiding plagiarism, acknowledging ideas borrowed by using citations and notes, including a bibliography at the end of a research paper, etc. The second reform was the introduction of more courses in "Literatures in English." Kazmi (1982) explains:

At some point the "English Department" redefined its scope to become a "Department of English." It began to teach the Literatures in English. Apart from a core of British literature courses, it strengthened its offerings in American literature...; it introduced some of the major works from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; and it includes texts from India, Nigeria, the West Indies, the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia (Kazmi, 1982:119).

These reforms are those I propose should take place in Hong Kong. But even more interesting and important about these changes that took place at UM were the reasons that had led to such decisions. The introduction of writing courses was brought by about the decline of English standards among students. According to Kazmi (1982), in the early 1970s, "the English Department progressively saw the need to improve its students' command of English," because, in the 1960s, "students had been so highly proficient in the use of the language that the Department could simply concentrate on the literature. In the 1970s, this could no longer be taken for granted: students

still came from the English-medium schools and had achieved a satisfactory grade in Advanced Level English but not all of them wrote with the same facility, the same precision, or even the same correctness as those of the 1960s. Of course, the uneven language level was partly the result of larger enrolment" (p.118-119). The situation in Malaysia in the 1960s and 1970s were indeed very similar to the circumstances in Hong Kong in the 1980s. There is much that the latter can learn from the former.

The second reform that the English Department in UM introduced was the addition of courses in works that focus on "non-British" writers. The reasons why this reform was instituted and how they are of relevance to Hong Kong are discussed in Chapter 5.

The lessons that can be learned from the history of UM are obvious: the decline of English standards meant that students needed more explicit help in articulating their ideas in writing, and as a result of this, writing courses are introduced; as well, the redefinition of "English" literature and pedagogical considerations of students' cultural background led to the introduction of courses in literatures in English. I am putting forward similar proposals for HKU: a writing course that enhances students' ability to write in English; and the inclusion of literary works written in English but not necessarily written by "British" or "American" writers.

Based on the five arguments I have presented above, I propose that the English Centre should build a content-based language module into the EAS course, and offers it to first-year students who are taking "Introduction to Literary Studies in English" (ILSE) in the English Department. The module is designed to give students concrete help in learning to read and write about literature.

#### 1.4. Summary

In this chapter, I began with Clark's (1987) contention that any curriculum renewal in foreign language education should take into consideration not only subject-specific concerns but also the wider socio-political context within which the curriculum is to be constructed and implemented. In the light of this theoretical framework, I gave a brief overview of the geographical, historical, educational, and language contexts of Hong Kong, to serve as a background against which the reasons for curriculum renewal at HKU are presented. In the second section of the chapter, I have tried to argue for the necessity of offering a literature-based reading/writing module to first-year students in HKU who are taking "Introduction to Literary Studies in English" in the English Department. The contention consists of five points: 1) the need to re-examine the current syllabus of the English for Arts Students course and the instructional materials that it uses; 2) the need to take into account the changes that are taking place in the student population within HKU--students who come to the University now are less prepared to study "English Literature" than their predecessors; 3) the need to consider the decline in English standards among incoming freshmen, particularly those who intend to major in English; 4) the need to re-consider the purpose of teaching English literature in the University of Hong Kong--the need to move from the "British" model to the "European" model; and 5) the need to look to other ex-British colonies for examples, to, in this case, Malaysia (14).

## Endnotes to Chapter 1

1. Article 103 of the Sino-British Treaty of Nanjing, August 29, 1842, *Consolidated Treaty Series*, Vol. 13, p.467.
2. Article 6 of the Convention of Friendship between China and Great Britain, October 24, 1860, *Consolidated Treaty Series*, Vol. 123, pp.73-74.
3. Convention between China and Great Britain Respecting an Extension of Hong Kong Territory, June 9, 1898, *Consolidated Treaty Series*, Vol. 186, pp. 310-11.
4. "Many leave for a passport," John Eliot, Hong Kong Survey 9, *Financial Times*, October 26, 1988.
5. There might be a potential danger here that I am thought of as portraying our students as unimaginative regurgitators of wisdom passed on to them by their teachers. I might also be thought of as claiming that the "Western" model of education is superior and the right one to be embraced, and hence of being "anglo-centric." I defend myself by saying that this is an erroneous assumption: being to think critically, creatively, and independently are not features unique to a "Western" mode of education. The question at stake is not so much a difference between "Eastern" and "Western" models of education, but the difference between passive and active ways of learning.
6. See Wang, 1986.
7. I am using the term "literary competence" in the way Maley defines it (and not in Culler's (1975) more formal terms). This is how Maley (1989:27) explains the concept: "Literary competence" is the "knowledge which underlies our ability to perform adequately in response to literature"; it includes:
  - a. An awareness of certain ground rules that have been established over the years;
  - b. A certain degree of linguistic sophistication;



- c. A degree of familiarity with particular conventions and a literary tradition that is now world-wide;
- d. Wide experience with works coming from different literary genres.

It needs also to be pointed out that I am not equating "literary competence" with familiarity with Western culture or English literature. That is why I underscore the fact that I am referring to literary competence in English literature (as opposed, in this case, to Chinese literature).

Although I suspect that my colleagues in the Chinese Department would probably say that students of the present generation also lack literary competence in Chinese literature, such claims are outside the territory of my discussion here.

8. Any argument related to the decline of language standards, I believe, is not easy to substantiate. To quantify such "decline" is an almost impossible task. For instance, I have been teaching English in the University of Hong Kong since 1985, and I can say with some certainty that students who came to the University in the mid-eighties had better English than those who came in the mid-nineties, but this is an impression that cannot be turned into concrete proof, to be presented in the form of statistics or something of the sort. Looking at the grades students obtain is not very helpful either. Apparently, over the years, the Hong Kong Examination Authority has adjusted the standards of grades in order to maintain a certain percentage of As, Bs, etc.; hence, a student who received an "A" in "Use of English" in the 1960s, for example, is very different from a student who obtained a similar grade in 1996. Despite the difficulty of quantifying the decline of language (English) standards in Hong Kong, I believe, nevertheless, that it is possible to discuss it by referring to impressions that people from different sectors of society have about this issue. The wide range of discussions in the Hong Kong society in the last decade about this issue seems to show

that there is a general consensus that the standard of English has, in general terms, declined. For examples of such discussions, see, for instance, *South China Morning Post*, March 7, 1991, Editorial; Glain, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, March 26, 1991, pp.1-2; Clarke, *South China Morning Post*, June, 24, 1993, p.2; Moy, *Asia Magazine*, Vol. 31, No. 14, April 23-25, 1993, pp.9-12; C.K. Lau, *South China Morning Post*, September 18, 1995, pp.69-70; C.K. Lau, *South China Morning Post*, December 18, 1995, pp.6-7; Tsang, *South China Morning Post*, December 26, 1995, p.7.

9. According to M. Cheng (1987), English literature is taught in China in two academic departments: in the English department and the Chinese department. The former emphasizes more the acquisition of language through literature, and the latter the appreciation of literature. Comparing Chinese literary texts with Western literary texts is a method used by the Chinese department to teach literature (Wang and Feng, 1986; Fu and Xia, 1986).
10. This is seen in the large quantity of literary criticism on Western literature that is written in Chinese. This phenomenon of writing criticism in one's own language is of course worldwide. In Britain and the U.S.A., for example, students of Chinese Literature write their essays in English, and the most scholarly publications are written in English, instead of Chinese. In Hong Kong, however, not too many scholars, not to say students of English literature, are capable of writing literary criticism in Chinese, because their training has been very different from that of their counterparts in Mainland China.
11. This point is rather obvious, as Hong Kong has been a Colony under British rule for more than a 100 years. It has been discussed by scholars who study the differences between China and Hong Kong; for example, Li (1992), Leung (1992), kwo (1992).
12. There are, of course, other important differences between the two places.

For example, while a great majority of the population in Hong Kong are ethnic Chinese, Malaysia is composed of three ethnic groups--native Malays, Chinese, and Indians; while the language spoken in Hong Kong is mainly Cantonese, the languages used in Malaysia include Cantonese and Hokkien, Tamil, and of course, Malay; and while Hong Kong does not have a corpus of localized literature written in English, Malaysia has, since its independence, produced a number of local writers who write in English. Furthermore, after it became independent, Malaysia had the task of nation-building, including the building up of its national literature. But Hong Kong does not have this need, as it is to revert to Chinese sovereignty, and China already has a very long literary tradition and a rich resource of literary texts. But my focus of attention in this part of the thesis is that Malaysia, as a ex-British colony, had gone through a process of decolonization, and there is much that we in Hong Kong can learn from its experience.

13. Bahasa Malaysia became the medium of instruction in the University of Malaya in 1983 (Lim, 1995, p.73).
14. In this chapter, although I have attempted to look at curriculum reform in the light of the historical-socio-cultural context of Hong Kong in some detail, I could be accused of having neglected an important dimension of the teaching of literature. Theorists such as Pennycock (1994) and Phillipson (1992) might accuse me of being anglo-centric, of trying to preserve the influence of English literature over Chinese students even after 1997.

I defend myself against such allegation on the following grounds: first, it is precisely because I think English literature will be regarded and taught differently in post-colonial Hong Kong that I am writing this thesis; otherwise, the status quo can be preserved, even after 1997, why would curriculum renewal be needed? Second, the fact that English literature will

be taught should not be equated with the perpetuation of British influence. English literature is taught in universities in other Chinese communities such as Taiwan and China. The question here is not so much what is taught, but how it is taught. I have already explained in 1.3.4. that I believe that, after 1997, English literature will become increasingly a foreign literature: following the European model, it is likely that students in Hong Kong will already have a firm foundation in Chinese literature before they study English literature. In perhaps another 10 to 20 years after Hong Kong has reverted to Chinese sovereignty, English literature will be taught in ways very similar to that in Taiwan and China, where students are encouraged to discuss it in Chinese and write academic papers in Chinese. But for reasons I have explained in 1.3.4., Hong Kong will need to go through a transitional period during which English is still the medium of expression (both in spoken and written forms).

## **PART II: DESIGNING A New CURRICULUM**

In Part I, I have provided background information on Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong (HKU); and against this background, I have presented five arguments which support my call for curriculum renewal, and specifically, for the introduction of a content-based language module into the English for Arts Students (EAS) course. In this part, I shall turn to an examination of theories and attempt to build a theoretical foundation on which a new curriculum would be built.

Part II consists of four chapters: Chapter 2 surveys various approaches to the design of a curriculum, including language and literature syllabuses; Chapter 3 looks at two models of reading as well as several major literary theories belonging to the "text-based" approaches in the history of modern literary theory; Chapter 4 discusses five major ways of teaching writing in ESL settings on the university level; and different ways of teaching students to write about literature; Chapter 5 examines criteria for the selection of instructional materials and then focuses on Chinese American literature, which, as I shall argue, is suitable pedagogical materials for a course I am proposing.

These chapters will form the basis for further discussion in Chapter 6, in the third part of this thesis. In that chapter, I shall attempt to put theory into practice, and construct a "Reading and Writing about Literature" module, to be taught in the second half of the year-long EAS course.

## CHAPTER 2: APPROACHES TO THE DESIGN OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE SYLLABUSES

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter begins my discussion of a theoretical basis on which a literature-based language course will be built. I shall argue that a content-based model which uses literary materials as its content, and which teaches reading and writing skills, will be a suitable pedagogical paradigm for a new curriculum I am proposing in this thesis.

There are three components in this curriculum: language teaching (teaching students reading and writing skills); literature teaching (teaching students how to approach literature, especially fiction); and curriculum design (the steps to preparing, implementing, and assessing a curriculum). Accordingly, this chapter is composed of three parts--all related to curriculum and syllabus designs--with each part focusing on one of these components. The first part begins with a brief discussion of the ways a "curriculum" and a "syllabus" can be defined, goes on to discuss how language syllabuses have been categorized, and then examines four major types of language syllabus. In the second part, I shall turn to literature syllabuses, nine of which will be discussed. The third part looks at planning models, through which syllabuses can be implemented. I see the relationship between syllabuses and planning models as analogous to that between water and container: Syllabuses contain abstract concepts (water); and planning models are channels (containers) through which these concepts can be applied to the classroom. Planning models are helpful for they aid curriculum developers to make decisions, such as: what objectives and goals, content, teaching methods, as well as assessment criteria to choose.

## 2.2. Types of Language Syllabus

### 2.2.1. Towards a Definition of a Curriculum and a Syllabus

The term "curriculum" has been defined differently by different researchers and educationalists. Speaking in general terms, "curriculum" has been used in a broad sense and a narrow sense. In its broad sense, it refers to all the experiences that a person undergoes in school, including those that he may not be aware of, for example, the "hidden curriculum" (Stubbs, 1983). In a narrower sense, it refers to the experiences that a person encounters in a particular school subject, such as a foreign language. Littlewood (1991) cites two examples of curriculum being defined in the broad sense, and two in a narrower sense.

First, curriculum in the broad sense: Richards et al (1985: xx) describes a curriculum as "an educational program which states:

- the educational purposes of the program (the ends);
- the content, teaching procedures, and learning experiences which will be necessary to achieve this purpose (the means); and
- some means for assessing whether or not the educational ends have been achieved."

The second example is from Robertson (1971), quoted in Yalden (1987:29):

"The curriculum includes the goals, objectives, contents, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of school."

In the narrower sense of the term "curriculum," especially when it is used to describe a foreign language curriculum, we find Richards et al (1985:xx) defining it in the following way: In language teaching, curriculum development includes:

- the study of the purposes for which a learner needs a language ("needs analysis");
- the setting of objectives and the development of a syllabus, teaching methods, and materials;
- the evaluation of the effects of these teaching procedures on the learner's language ability.

These concepts are included in Allen's (1984) six level of curriculum design. Allen's definition, however, is different from Richards et al's in one major respect: he adds the idea of "concept formation," by which he means the theoretical underpinnings that underlie a foreign or second language education. Allen's (1984:xx) six levels are:

- concept formation (general principles of language learning);
- administrative decision making (which includes the formulation of general aims);
- materials design (including texts, exercises and so on);
- classroom activity (where materials are adapted by individual teachers to their own situation);
- evaluation (which tests the validity of the decisions made at earlier stages).

Combining the elements in these definitions of a curriculum. Littlewood (1991:12) comes up with the following profile which contains the various elements in a ESL curriculum:



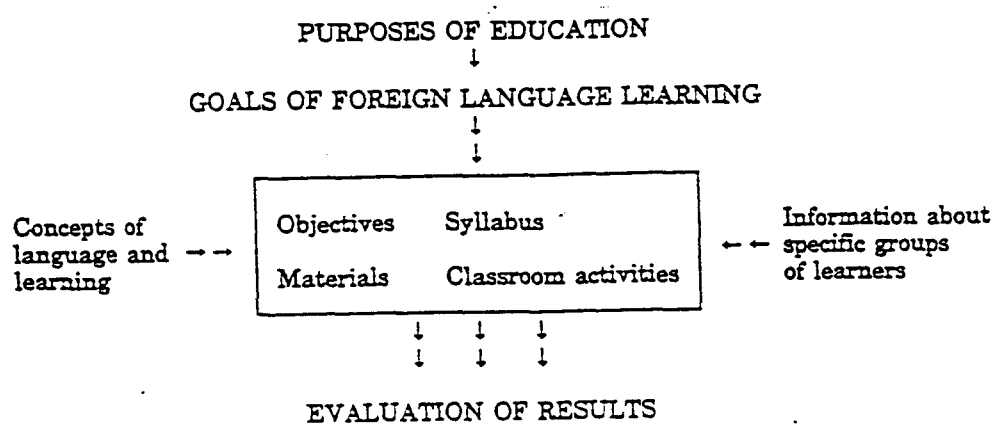


Fig. 3. Elements in a Curriculum Design  
From: Littlewood, 1991:12

What has been defined as "curriculum" in the above section is termed by some researchers as a "syllabus." The connection between a "curriculum" and a "syllabus" can be rather confusing. As I have already explored this relationship under "Definition of Terms" in the "Introduction," I shall be brief in my discussion here. Briefly put, there are two major positions regarding the difference (or lack of difference) between these terms. First, some researchers use the terms interchangeably, and do not make a distinction between them (e.g., Stern, 1983; White, 1988:4; Yalden, 1987:29). Second, other researchers place "syllabus" in a subordinate position to a "curriculum," or regard the former as a sub-part of the latter--e.g., where "curriculum" entails the whole range of subjects taught in a particular school, a "syllabus" describes only one of these subjects (e.g., Allen, 1984; Dubin and Olshtain, 1986; Krahne, 1987; White, 1988). I have explained in the "Introduction" that, in this thesis, I use the term "curriculum" to refer broadly to a content (literature)-based component within a larger language course (the EAS course in HKU), and a "syllabus" to the various versions within that curriculum. The various syllabuses share the same objectives, teaching methods, means of

evaluation as the broader "curriculum," but each "syllabus" entails different contents, i.e., different literary materials.

### **2.2.2. Ways of Categorizing Language Syllabuses**

Although the main purpose of this thesis, as shown in its title, is to teach Hong Kong Chinese students to read and write about literature, I shall discuss language syllabuses in some detail for three reasons. First, although a curriculum I propose here is a literature-based model, it aims not only at teaching students to study literature, but also to consolidate their skills in reading and writing through the study of literature. Second, the proposed curriculum is to be implemented not in the English Department in HKU, which teaches literature, but the English Centre, whose main responsibility is to teach language. Third, as I have explained in the "Introduction" and will explain in greater detail in Chapter 4, my proposal is a year-long curriculum: the first part (first semester) focuses on writing skills, and the second part (second term) on discipline-related reading and writing skills. Besides the teaching of literature therefore, there is also much emphasis on language teaching. Such an emphasis explains my decision to include a rather extensive discussion of language syllabuses. The relevance of this discussion to a curriculum that I propose in this thesis is explained in 2.2.4.

In this section as well as the next, I shall focus, among the elements within a "curriculum" or a "syllabus" as shown in Littlewood's diagram above, on those within the inner square, i.e., objectives, organization, materials, and classroom activities. I shall first describe the various ways language syllabuses have been categorized, and then focus on four of them. First, Wilkins (1976) classifies language syllabuses into two types, "synthetic" and "analytic," and contends that any syllabus can be placed somewhere on a continuum between a synthetic and an analytic approach. A synthetic syllabus is one in which the

different parts of the language are taught separately and gradually. The underlying assumption here is that the acquisition of language is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of the language has been built up. In this kind of syllabus, language items are ordered into a list of grammatical structures and lexical items. The learner is introduced to these items step by step, and it is his responsibility to "synthesize" the different bits that he has learned.

Unlike the synthetic syllabus, the analytic syllabus is organized in terms of the purposes for which learner learns a language, and the performance he needs in order to achieve these purposes. The assumption here is that language could be learned "holistically," that is, given the right contexts, given meaningful, unanalyzed language, the learner will be able to analyze the language itself. Wilkins (1976) sums up the essence of this kind of syllabus in the following way:

In analytic approaches there is no attempt at...careful control of the learning environment. Components of language are not seen as building blocks which have to be progressively accumulated. Much greater variety of linguistic structure is permitted from the very beginning and the learner's task is to approximate his own linguistic behavior more closely to the global language (1976:2).

Whereas Wilkins' way of categorizing syllabuses focus on the interaction between language input and the learner, a second way of classifying syllabuses is broader, including differences in course design, instruction, and language learning (Long and Crookes, 1993:29). The following three researchers propose concepts that exemplify this approach. The first of these is White (1988), who divides syllabuses into two types, which he calls Type A

and Type B. Type A, also called the "Interventionist" approach, focuses on what is learned. The contents within the syllabus is pre-determined and pre-digested by someone else, some kind of authority; it is therefore external to the learner, and other-directed. On the contrary, Type B, called "Non-interventionist," is a type of syllabus which is negotiated between the teacher and the learner; it is therefore internal to the learner, and comparatively more self-directed than the Type A syllabus.

A similar viewpoint is put forward by Breen (1987a), who discusses syllabus design in terms of "propositional plans" and "process plans," each of which expresses a different paradigm. Propositional plans represent "what is to be achieved through teaching and learning as formal statements," and organize content so that it fulfills the objectives of the course; at the same time, knowledge and capabilities are organized and presented as things which are:

inherently system-based...expressed in logical formulae, rules, schemas, or categories deriving from an analysis of the knowledge that is assumed to be the objective of which the plan serves. Propositional plans map out knowledge of and the conventions of language performance (Breen, 1987a:160).

Process plans, on the other hand, represent "how something is done" and how learners find a way for themselves:

They...seek to represent knowledge of how correctness, appropriacy, and meaningfulness can be simultaneously achieved during communication within events and situations (Breen, 1987a: 160).

This approach is also reflected in Nunan's (1988) categories. He makes a distinction between product-oriented and process-oriented syllabuses. The first type are "those in which the focus is on the knowledge and skills which learners should gain as a result of instruction," and the second type "are those which focus on the learning experiences themselves" (p.27).

A third way of classifying language syllabuses focuses on the content. Stern (1992) identifies four main content areas : the study of the target language, the study of the target culture, communicative activities, and general language education. The first two areas consist of the systematic study of a language and a culture; the third engages the learners in a variety of activities during which they use the language in its sociocultural context; the fourth is the broadest: it asks the learners to "reflect in a generalized way about languages, cultures, and learning" (Stern, 1992:103), and not simply focus on learning a language or its culture. The four areas are reflected in four kinds of syllabus: the language syllabus (pronunciation, grammar, and functional analysis), the communicative activities syllabus, the cultural syllabus, and the general language education syllabus.

Such attempts at dividing syllabuses into types are useful in helping us to understand the complexities associated with the field of syllabus design; however, as with any kind of attempt at compartmentalizing knowledge, such classifications can appear to be rather arbitrary. For example, the dividing line between "Interventionist" and "Non-interventionist" (White, 1988) or "process-oriented" and "product-oriented" (Nunan, 1988) is not necessarily distinct and clear-cut. In real life situations, language syllabuses combine the two approaches. An example is a structuralist-situational syllabus where learners study certain words and syntactic structures that are particularly

pertinent to a situation, and practice using the vocabulary and sentence patterns in communicative way, in "scenarios" (Di Pietro, 1982) or "situations." Another example of blending the different approaches is seen in Allen's (1983) "multi-level" or "variable focus" curriculum, which is modified by Stern (1983) into the following way:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<i>Structural</i>	<i>Functional</i>	<i>Experiential</i>
Focus on language (formal features) (a) Structural control  (b) Materials simplified structurally (c) Mainly structural practice	Focus on language (discourse features) (a) Discourse control  (b) Materials simplified functionally (c) Mainly discourse practice	Focus on the use of language (a) Situational or topical control (b) Authentic language  (c) Free practice

Fig. 4. The variable Focus Curriculum (Allen Stern)  
From: Littlewood, 1991:20

Allen's point is that the curriculum should contain all three levels at the same time, and the focus is different in different stages of language learning. For example, in a beginners' course, the instructional process moves from Level 1 to Level 2 to Level 3; whereas in an intermediate course, the process could be reversed. The theoretical thinking that underlies this curriculum, as Stern explains, is that "a curriculum should be based both on formal and functional analysis and at the same time offer opportunities for experiential participation in real-life communication" (p.262).

### 2.2.3. Four Language Syllabuses

The four syllabuses I have chosen to discuss are: the structural syllabus, the

notional-functional syllabus, the task-based syllabus, and the content-based syllabus. These four types of syllabus are chosen for they represent (generally speaking) the major categories of syllabuses described above: the structural, and the notional-functional syllabus are examples of the synthetic, Type A, propositional, and product-oriented syllabus; the task-based syllabus is an example of the analytic, Type B, process, and process-oriented syllabus; and content-based syllabus lies somewhere in between the two major types (Nunan, 1988:49).

In describing each of the four syllabuses, I shall discuss the theoretical assumptions that underlie it, its contents, as well as its merits and drawbacks. I will then discuss their relevance to the pedagogical situation in HKU, and in particular, to the curriculum I try to construct. I will pay more attention to the fourth type of syllabus for, as I shall explain later, the content-based syllabus has the greatest relevance for the curriculum I am proposing.

### The Structural Syllabus

Underlying the structural syllabus is the assumption that grammatical or structural aspects of language forms are the most basic and useful. The content of this kind of syllabus is form, primarily grammatical form. Most existing structural syllabuses use some form of traditional/Latin-based, descriptive grammatical classification or terminology. The domain of the structural syllabus tends to be the sentence. A classification of sentence types usually includes semantically defined types such as statements, questions, exclamations; syntactically defined types such as declaratives and interrogatives; and grammatically defined types such as simple, compound, and complex sentences. Besides, syntactic structures, the structural syllabus also includes a treatment of morphological features such as singular or plural

markings, the forms that mark the tense system of the language, articles, prepositions, gender markers, prefixes, and suffixes, etc. (White, 1988:50-52).

krahnke (1987) has identified a number of positive characteristics of the structural syllabus. These include: first, the structure of grammar is the most general of components of communicative competence, because each utterance embodies a structure, which can be used for a variety of functions, situations, or meanings. Because form is the most generalizable aspect of language, it can be argued, it should be the basis for a language course content. A second advantage of the structural syllabus is its familiarity. The grammar of a language may be complex; but when a course says it teaches grammar, students immediately know what to expect, they will also leave the course with a sense of what they have learned.

A third advantage, proposed by Ellis (1986), is that although structural knowledge may not be used directly by learners, it has the function of preventing fossilization or cessation of learning. A fourth advantage is that structural knowledge of the language provides the teacher and the learner with a common basis on which to discuss the use of the language. Last, it is comparatively easy to construct culture and value-free content in a structural syllabus. If, for political, religious, or cultural reasons, a country wishes to teach a foreign language without too much foreign culture, this kind of syllabus can be used to achieve that purpose.

The structural syllabus, on the other hand, has its limitations:

The first and major weakness of the syllabus has to do with the usability, applicability, and transferability of structural knowledge. A learner may have understood the grammar of a language, but to what extent he is able to make use of his knowledge to produce meaningful discourse (both spoken and



written) is uncertain. Another criticism of the syllabus is that while it lays much emphasis on one aspect of the target language (grammatical structures), it ignores another equally important aspect (communication).

A third criticism is that it fails to give an adequate picture of the language being learned. It presents learners with the form of a language, but not the sets of meaning that go with it. The underlying assumption is that there is a one-to-one relation between form and meaning, and that a language is learned once the form is mastered. The falsity of this kind of assumption is pointed out by Wilkins (1976):

Any syllabus which is an itemized list of points or structures is inevitably incomplete. It is impossible, therefore, for a grammatical syllabus to cover the grammatical facts exhaustively...even when we have described the grammatical (and lexical) meaning of a sentence, we have not accounted for the ways in which it is used as an utterance (p.10).

### The Functional-Notional Syllabuses

Nunan (1988) defines "functions" as the "communicative purposes for which we use language," while "notions" are "the conceptual meanings (objects, entities, states of affairs, logical relationships) expressed through language" (p.35). Hence "time " is a notion, whereas "asking for the time" is a function.

The notional-functional syllabus, which is based on Notional/Functionalism, grew out of a long tradition of functional linguists. Names which are associated with this tradition include Firth (1957) and Halliday (1973). These linguists insist that adequate descriptions of language should not exclude its uses and social contexts; in other words, such descriptions must include

information on how and for what purposes, as well as in what ways language is used. In the United States, sociolinguists such as Hymes (1972) provide much of the theoretical basis for Notional/Functionalism in language teaching. If language is seen as a relationship between form and function, Notional/Functionalism sees function as primary and form as secondary.

The greatest strength of this kind of syllabus is probably the fact that it includes information on how language is used. In a course that follows this syllabus, students are given opportunities to use language in both spoken and written interaction. These students, compared with those who are taught using the grammatical syllabus will probably, as Krahne (1987) puts it, "have more experience with, and knowledge about, which linguistic forms do what in the new language, and they will have ... [more] exposure to at least some real or simulated interaction in the new language" (p.35). They will, in short, be encouraged to look at language less as an abstract set of linguistic elements and rules, and more as a means of communicative system.

The notional-functional syllabus, however, has also been criticized on several grounds: First, it is not easy to define "functions" with precision. The interpretation of what a "function" is depends on the context, the role of the speakers, the learners' cultural knowledge, etc.; it is not possible to treat language as an isolated list of items to be taught without specifying the contexts in which they occur. A second and related difficulty is that it is almost impossible to find a one-to-one correspondence between context and function. Third, it is difficult to combine function with structure. For example, function that is typically introduced early in a notional/functional syllabus (e.g., desiring, wanting, requesting something) requires language structures (e.g., "Could I," "May I," "Would you, please") typically taught in a later part of a structural syllabus. How to resolve this "conflict of interest" remains a

question for the language curriculum developer.

### Task-Based Syllabuses

Two types of task-based syllabuses will be mentioned: the procedural, and the process syllabus. These two kinds of syllabus are similar in the following ways: a) they share the same theoretical assumption that a person learns to use a language through being exposed to it and through using it; b) they reject the synthetic, Type A syllabuses and the units of analysis on which they are based; and c) they share the belief that it is through engaging in tasks, through classroom processes, that learners acquire language. Nevertheless, they also differ in several important ways, for example, in how they define "tasks," in how they determine syllabus content, in how they select and sequence tasks, as well as in the way they choose methodological options to be followed in the classroom (Nunan, 1988; White, 1988; Long and Crookes, 1992). I shall briefly describe each of these syllabuses and discuss their advantages and disadvantages.

#### The Procedural syllabus

The procedural syllabus is associated with the work of Prabhu, Ramani, and others on the Bangalore/Madras Communication Teaching Project (CTP) (Prabhu, 1984, 1987). Prabhu defines a "task" as "activity which require[s] learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allow[s] teachers to control and regulate that process" (Prabhu, 1987:24). In practice, teachers first demonstrate to students how to go about doing a task through a "pre-task"; afterwards, students engage in a "task proper," usually individually. Three major task types were used in the Bangalore project: information gap activities, reasoning gap activities and opinion-gap activities. When students make mistakes, they are corrected "incidentally" and not "systematically."

The project had been evaluated by Beretta and Davies (1985) who, while admitting the limitations of their study, end their report by saying: "we regard the results as being, on the whole, positive, and conclude that they provide tentative support for the CTP claim that grammar construction can take place through a focus on meaning alone" (p.126). But other researchers have been skeptical of its success. Greenwood (1985), for example, argues that "none of the accounts of the project had offered sufficient evidence to evaluate the claims made for the procedural syllabus and its associated methodology" (White, 1988:108-109). Long and Crookes (1992) further point out three weaknesses in the project: first, the selection of tasks is not based on needs analysis, but merely on the impressions of the curriculum developers/teachers; second, the grading and sequencing of tasks are done arbitrarily, made according to the impressionistic judgments of /curriculum developers/teachers; and third, the design lacks an evaluation component.

### The Process syllabus

The rationale that underlies the process syllabus is an educational rather than linguistic one. It is based on the belief that students should be able to learn according to their own individual learning styles and preferences, and not be forced to learn pre-selected and pre-digested knowledge through a syllabus and a methodology already determined by some kind of authority.

Following this belief, in actual classroom practice, the syllabus is planned together by the teacher and the learners; they collaborate on four levels (Breen, 1987b): first, in making decisions relating to aims and content, hence providing an overall direction to their activities; second, in deciding on the procedures to follow; third, in choosing activities to engage in, activities that will help to achieve the goals set in level 1; and fourth, in selecting tasks to be

undertaken within the activities. After the tasks, evaluation is carried out through discussion between the teacher and learners, regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of the chosen tasks, activities, and procedure, in relation to the decisions made at the beginning of the course.

This syllabus reflects the educational ideals of progressivism, of, for example, Freire's (1970) concepts of "praxis" and "dialogue." But, as White (1988) has pointed out, like all such utopian proposals, there are problems implementing them in the real world. In the case of the process syllabus, some of the difficulties with putting it into practice include the following: First, it makes great demands on the teacher: it requires a high level of creativity and initiative on his part. Second, it requires a great deal of resources beyond the textbooks usually found in the language classrooms: teachers and materials writers have to look for relevant materials within the immediate setting where the learning takes place. Third, it demands initiative and commitment on the part of the students: because this kind of syllabus is not teacher-centered, students will have to take responsibility for their own learning; this might be difficult for students who are used to traditional type of teaching, or who come from cultures where they are trained to be passive listeners rather than active participants in the language classroom. Fourth, It poses problems of evaluation: the nature of this kind of learning prevents it from being measured by traditional discrete-point achievement tests. It is difficult, for example, to adopt this kind of teaching in an educational setting where students have to demonstrate progress (in order, for example, to be promoted to a higher level or grade ) through performance on such tests.

The relevance of these syllabuses to my proposed curriculum will be discussed in 2.2.4.

### The Content-based Syllabus

I will devote more attention to this kind of syllabus (than the others) for it seems to have much relevance for the HKU setting. The relevance of this kind of syllabus could be seen in three areas: first, one of its major aims, especially in the case of the "adjunct" model, is to link a content area with language, to help students to read materials in one subject area, and to articulate their responses to what they have read. This is what I hope to achieve in the content-based module to be taught in the second half of the EAS course in HKU. Second, the content-based syllabus (again, especially the "adjunct" model) grew out of a need to raise students' language standards so that they could cope with their studies in their own subjects. These students are either handicapped because English is not their mother tongue, or because they have inadequate training prior to their entry into university. In view of the decline in English standards among HKU students in recent years (see 1.3.3), models such as those implemented in the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and the University of Washington( see discussion of the "Adjunct" model below) serve as useful references for us. Content-based instruction is closely related to the "Writing Across the Curriculum" (WAC) Movement, which is described in 4.2.6.

Snow, Met, and Genesse (1989) define content-based language instruction as "the integration of particular content within language teaching aims...both in its overall purpose and in its implementation." Content-based instruction "aims at eliminating the artificial separation between language instruction and subject matter classes..." (p.2).

### Historical Antecedents

Snow and Brinton (1990) trace the roots of content-based language instruction to at least three movements in the history of language teaching. The first

movement, "Language Across the Curriculum," which originated in Britain, was designed for English speakers (*A Language for Life*, 1975). A basic belief is that for effective learning to take place, language teaching must occur in all subject classrooms, not only in English classes. Advocates of the movement argue that students must be given ample opportunities not only to "learn to read" and "learn to write," but also to "read to learn" and "write to learn" in order to fully benefit from the education process. There is therefore a great deal of reciprocity between language and content.

Although the relationship between language and subject matter the "Language Across the Curriculum" movement stresses is reflected in the content-based language syllabus I am discussing here, Snow and Brinton have, I believe, committed two errors in relating this movement to content-based instruction. First, the movement is a mother-tongue movement, and therefore cannot be claimed to have direct relevance for foreign language teaching. Second, by "effective learning," the proponents of the movement do not simply mean the learning of language, but more broadly, the acquisition of knowledge and the training of the mind. By nature then, this movement is different from the other two that Snow and Brinton refer to, which are directly linked to the learning of a second or foreign language.

The second movement is the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) movement. H.G. Widdowson (1983) has noted that

...[i]n ESP we are dealing with students for whom the learning of English is auxiliary to some other professional or academic purpose. It is clearly a means of achieving something else and not an end in itself... This being so, ESP is (or ought logically to be) integrally linked with areas of activity (academic, vocational,

professional) which have already been defined and which represent the learners' aspirations.

On another occasion, H.G. Widdowson (1978) argues for the linking of language teaching in the schools with other subjects (e.g., physics, chemistry, biology, map drawing) as, he says, "this not only helps to ensure the link with reality and the pupils' own experience, but also provides us with the most certain means of teaching language as communication, as use rather than usage" (p.16).

The third movement is the "Immersion education" movement. It began in 1965 in Quebec, Canada, where monolingual children were put into "immersion" programs where they learned most of their subjects in a second language. It was designed in accordance with the belief that "intensive exposure to the target language through natural communication with a native speaker [is] considered essential, and..., starting at a young age" (Snow, Met, and Genesse, 1989:9). The program has since then been used in many educational settings in Canada, at different levels.

### Theoretical Underpinnings

The three movements outlined above share a number of convictions. These are summarized by Spanos (1987:229):

- "1) language teaching should be related to the eventual uses to which the learner will put the language;
- 2) the use of informational content tends to increase the motivation of the language learner;
- 3) effective teaching requires attention to prior knowledge, existing knowledge, the total academic environment, and the linguistic proficiency of the learner;



- 4) language teaching should focus on contextualized language use rather than on sentence level usage;
- 5) language learning is promoted by a focus on significant and relevant content from which learners can derive structures that facilitate the acquisition of vocabulary and syntax as well as written and oral production."

Support for these beliefs could be found in a number of theories. The first rationale is that language is learned most effectively in "meaningful, purposeful social and academic contexts" (Snow, Met , and Genesse, 1989). In real life situations, people talk about what they want to communicate, and not merely about language. In school settings, students acquire knowledge and learn about content subjects through the use of language. This point is made very clearly by Mohan in his book *Language and Content* (1986), in which he argues that a majority of second language learners do not learn language for its own sake, that they do so because they need to learn subject matter through the second language, which is the medium. Cantoni-Harvey (1987) echoes this point by saying: "When the learner's second language is both the object and medium of instruction, the content of each lesson must be taught simultaneously with the linguistic skills necessary for understanding" (p.22).

Another rationale that underlies content-based language instruction is that it provides learners with the necessary motivation (Snow, Met, Genesse, 1989). Language in this case is not learned in a vacuum. Students use it to acquire knowledge, to meet academic needs, to complete assignments, and to pass examinations.

A third rationale is related to the way language is acquired. Krashen (1982) contends that for language acquisition to take place, the learner must be

provided with "comprehensible input," that is, language at just above the learner's competence. Content-based instruction fits in very well with Krashen's model of language acquisition because, as Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989) explain:

[s]ince input which will serve as language acquisition must also contain new elements to be acquired, comprehension is accomplished with the help from cues from situational and verbal contexts. These interact with the learner's imperfect knowledge of the language, and with his or her world of knowledge and expectations. The associations of form and meaning which are required for successful comprehension feed into a developing stock of formal, functional, and semantic relationships, as the learner acquires new elements of language .... This process requires that the learner be focused on meaning rather than on form...the learning of significant, relevant content through a second language, the shared principle of all content-based approaches, can satisfy [this condition] (pp.3-4).

### Models of Content-Based Language Instruction

I shall describe three versions of content-based instruction as they are used in ESL/EFL university settings and attempt to discuss their merits and drawbacks. Then, I will discuss their suitability for the HKU situation.

### Theme-based or Topic-based Instruction

This kind of instruction can occur in different forms: The first kind is a syllabus that contains a number of unrelated topics (e.g., "The brain," "The American family," "Life in London"...). Teachers select an array of materials, including reading passages, audio-visual tapes, films, etc. that are related to the topic.

They then design exercises that aim at teaching language through content. The exercises could include reading and listening comprehension, oral discussion, as well as writing practice. The second kind is built on a theme (e.g., "Marketing") and each unit within the syllabus focuses on an area within the theme (e.g., consumer behavior, product development, advertising strategies, etc.). Between these two types of instruction, there could be many other possibilities, e.g., a 12 week course can contain three topics, and each topic is taught for four weeks.

The first kind of instruction offers students a range of topics and therefore could cater to the interests and needs of different students. But since each topic is given only superficial treatment, depth is sacrificed at the expense of breadth. The reverse is true for the second type of instruction: a topic or theme is discussed in detail but is done so at the risk of causing students to lose their interest towards the end of the course.

Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989) have pointed out that these syllabuses are usually used in lower/intermediate ESL/EFL classes in language institutes rather than the more established educational settings, such as universities. But theoretically, speaking, there is no reason why they cannot be used in ESL/EFL classes for foreign students who have, for example, newly arrived in the U.K. or the U.S.A., and are taking intensive English courses to prepare themselves for formal entry into an undergraduate or postgraduate program.

### Sheltered Courses

Sheltered courses are offered to students who are studying a certain content subject in their second language within a university setting. "Sheltered" courses are attached to "normal" classes where native speakers study a content area in their own language. In "sheltered" sections, a number of

pedagogical modifications are made, e.g., the professor (who is usually a native speaker of the language himself) lectures at a slower pace and provides more explanation in areas where special terms or phraseology might pose difficulty for the students; the readings are usually carefully chosen; the assignments are also modified-- usually those that require the receptive, rather than the productive skills, are given, e.g., frequent, short multiple choice tests that examine students' comprehension of the course content are required rather than oral presentations, essays, or research papers. In this kind of instruction then, content-teaching is the main concern; language teaching, which is an auxiliary aim, occurs incidentally.

An example of the "sheltered" instruction model is a program in the University of Ottawa in Canada (Brinton, Snow, and Wesche, 1989). In one such course, "Introduction to Psychology," which enrolls more than a thousand students, students sign up for one of four options: Normal (English), Normal (French), "Sheltered" (English), and "Sheltered" (French). The "sheltered" sections are open to local Canadian students who have either English or French as a second language and would like more instruction or practice in the second language through a content course, or foreign students for whom neither English nor French is their native language.

This type of courses has the advantage of helping "foreign" students who are studying in a "native" setting, e.g., Chinese students in U.S. universities; they enable the foreign students to keep up with their studies without being too handicapped by their (presumably lower) standards of English. This kind of arrangement, I think, is suitable for students who are new in a cultural and educational setting; but in the long run, it has more drawbacks than merits.

At least three problems can be pinpointed. First, it does the students more

harm than good if they are "sheltered" in these courses for too long; they will find it hard to adjust to "normal" classes afterwards. After all, they have chosen to leave their native lands to study in a foreign university, and through a foreign language; they therefore have the responsibility to meet the requirements of the university. Second, assessment could be a problem: if, as mentioned above, students in "sheltered" courses are evaluated by test formats that require receptive language skills, such as multiple choice tests or short questions, and those in "normal" classes are evaluated by means of essay-writing or oral presentations, it would be difficult, and indeed, unfair to assess them together. For being able to recall information is different from the ability to articulate one's opinions, and to express them in a clear and cogent manner. Third, the amount of content covered is bound to be different as well: it is likely that those who are "sheltered" are taught less, read less, write less, and consequently learn less because of the slower pace at which the course is being delivered. In this case, how could students in the "sheltered" and "normal" classes be considered to have taken or passed the same course?

### Adjunct Model

In the adjunct model, students are concurrently enrolled in two courses--a content course and a language course. The course is team-taught by two teachers, a subject teacher and a language teacher. The two of them work closely together in a number of ways. One area of collaboration is to reinforce students' understanding of lectures. For example, before lectures, the language tutor prepares his students for them by highlighting special linguistic features or special terms that might occur during classes; after lectures, he reinforces what is taught by answering questions or clarifying points that are unclear to students. Another area of coordination occurs in helping students with their assignments. For example, the language tutor,

knowing that a short paper is due in a few weeks' time, prepares students for the assignment by taking them through the writing process--brainstorming ideas, coming up with an outline, producing a draft, refining the draft through peer conferencing as well as meeting with the teacher, and helping students to revise and edit the draft. He might even advise their students to ask their subject teachers for comments before they turn in the final, polished version of their paper.

An example of the adjunct model is the "Freshman Summer Program" at the University of California, Los Angeles (Snow and Brinton, 1988). Students in the program attend lectures in a subject area and are put into groups where they do language work. These groups include those designed for native speakers as well as those which are tailored for ESL students. A similar program is found in the University of Washington (see 4.2.6--The "Writing Link" program at the UW).

This model seems to have several distinct advantages: first, it has the strength of not having to lower the standards of certain groups in order to accommodate the needs of the "weaker" students (as the "Sheltered" model does); second, students are encouraged to see the connection between content and language, and are given adequate help in reading and writing skills; and third, inter-departmental cooperation will raise faculty's (especially those in the subject departments) awareness of the fact that language learning, in particular writing skills, is something that occurs in all learning situations, and not only in language classrooms; that they, too, have the responsibility to help students to write well, especially in ways which are acceptable to experts of their respective disciplines. (See 4.2.6., on notions associated with the "Writing Across the Curriculum").

Although this model seems to have a number of merits, implementing it could be rather difficult--not all universities have the resources which are at the disposal of UCLA and the University of Washington. Several hurdles must first be surmounted. Firstly, cooperation between departments is not easy: faculty members in different departments have different priorities, convictions (about, for example, what they should teach or not teach), different time schedules, or even offices located in different parts of campus; collaboration also means extra time and expenses which a university may not be able to afford. Second, there are problems concerning the expertise of the language teacher: to what extent must the language tutor understand a certain subject before he can effectively collaborate with his colleague in the subject department, in order, for example, to design meaningful writing assignments, or to guide students on writing an essay which is acceptable to the subject specialist. These issues are further discussed in 4.2.6.

#### **2.2.4. Relevance of the Four Language Syllabuses to My Proposed Curriculum**

So far in 2.2.2, I have discussed four types of language syllabus. To what extent can they be applied to the situation in HKU? I have explained in the "Introduction" that I have been dissatisfied with the current curricular structure of the EAS course, and attempt to propose a new one which is more suitable for students of this time and age. I propose that the year-long course be divided into two parts: the first part focuses on writing, and the second part on disciplinary modules. Two syllabuses, therefore, are needed: a "writing" syllabus for the first term, and a literature-based language syllabus for the second. Although my primary purpose in this thesis is to construct a discipline-specific syllabus, it is, to a certain extent, a continuation of the writing syllabus. I shall discuss the construction of the writing syllabus in Chapter 4 (in 4.3), and describe it in Appendix 4.

In the following section, as I consider the relevance of the four kinds of language syllabus to the HKU setting, I will discuss them in relation to both the writing and the literature-based syllabuses. Among the four kinds of language syllabus, the first two, that is, the grammatical and the notional-functional, are, to some extent, helpful in the design of the writing syllabus; the last two, the task-based, and in particular, the content-based syllabus, provide useful insight in my design of the literature-based syllabus.

The structural syllabus aims at helping students to learn grammatical rules, words, and sentence structures, and therefore appear to have more relevance for students at elementary and intermediate levels. As our students already have 13 years of English instruction before they come to university, they should be classified as advanced learners of English. Our students have a basic understanding of English grammar, and have enough vocabulary and knowledge of sentence structures to enable them to study their subjects, write papers, and take examinations in English at the university level. The structural syllabus, therefore, does not have much applicability for this setting, except, perhaps, in one area. As I shall explain in 4. 2.1., as with all ESL/EFL learners, there are certain common mistakes that Hong Kong Chinese students tend to make when they write. Many of these are either lexical or syntactic errors. It seems that one of the best ways to correct them is to have students practice using these words or sentence patterns in drills, following some of the methods that characterize the structural syllabus. (See 4.2.1).

As our students are advanced learners of English and are capable of communicating with others in English in most everyday life situations, the functional-notional syllabus does not have a great deal of relevance for them either. The concept of "notions," however, is helpful in my design of the writing syllabus. As is shown in 4.3 and Appendix 4, the writing syllabus is built



around a series of writing concepts (notions) to be taught to students. These concepts are first introduced and then reinforced in writing exercises. The final objective of the course is that students will be able to apply these concepts to the writing of academic essays and research papers.

The literature-based syllabus, on the other hand, could benefit from insight provided by the task-based syllabus. A syllabus I shall discuss in Chapter 6, which consists of tasks to be completed in class (see 6.2), demands that students understand a literary theoretical concept (e.g., "genre") and then demonstrate their understanding of the notion through the completion of a task (or several tasks) through reading and writing. The first part of the process, where the teacher introduces students to a concept in literary theory, and demonstrates to them how the concept can be applied to the reading of a literary work, resembles the "pre-task" in Prabhu's "procedural syllabus"; the second part, which involves the students' completion of a similar but much longer task, is like Prabhu's "task proper."

My syllabus, however, differs from the procedural and the process syllabus in several important ways. First, unlike the advocates of these two language syllabuses, I believe that conducting a needs analysis before the design of the syllabus is necessary. In this sense, my syllabus comes closer to what White (1988) calls the the Type A syllabus: the overall objectives, content, methodology and means of evaluation, are all pre-determined, pre-digested by the curriculum developer/materials writer/teacher. The lack of a needs analysis is a major weakness in the procedural and process syllabuses, has been pointed out by Long and Crookes (1992). I agree, for it is dangerous to base the design of a course merely on some impressionistic judgments of the syllabus designer.

A second way my syllabus differs from the procedural and process syllabuses is related to the first difference. Unlike the process syllabus in particular, which encourages collaboration between teacher and learners to negotiate the contents of a course as well as classroom procedures, my syllabus has been pre-planned before the course begins. The impractical nature of the idea of teacher-student negotiation in designing a syllabus has already been discussed earlier. In the HKU setting, such negotiation is particularly unrealistic, for two reasons. First, there are only 12 weeks in a course, and there is much that needs to be covered; time could not be wasted on exploration of the right contents and teaching procedures. It would be more realistic to present students with something concrete and make adjustments as the course progresses. Second, as White (1988) has pointed out, the process syllabus challenges both teacher and students' perceptions of their traditional roles in the classroom. As Chinese students have been trained, for many years throughout kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools, to be passive learners, and to regard teachers as authorities, they would find the challenge to negotiate a syllabus both frustrating and confusing (Watkins and Biggs, 1996). Instead of seeing this as an opportunity to voice their opinions, they might see the teacher as being lazy, irresponsible, and burdening them with work that he should have done himself. Although I do concede that student participation in the design of a syllabus has its merits, this could be done, in the Chinese context, later in a student's academic career when he has more knowledge of the subject he is studying, and more confidence in expressing his opinions in class. Chinese students in their first year in university need guidance and clear instructions. This is a point that I make repeatedly throughout the thesis (see. e.g., 3.2, 4.2, 5.2).

A third difference between my syllabus and the procedural and process syllabuses is a comparatively minor one. Different from the procedural

syllabus, which encourages students to work individually when they are engaged in the "task proper," I believe that it is important to encourage students to work collaboratively, in small groups. Working together provides students with mutual support, opportunities to share ideas, and to learn to cooperate in order to complete a task. The merits and drawbacks of collaborative learning are further elaborated in 4.2.3.

I end this section by discussing the relevance of the content-based syllabus to the HKU situation. I shall address this issue in light of each the three instructional models I have outlined above. First, theme-based or topic-based instruction: This kind of syllabus is applicable to a situation such as HKU, where the students would presumably be classified as advanced learners of English. At present, in the "English for Social Sciences" course, for example, students are divided into groups of 15 or 16 according to their major, and spend 12 weeks learning English through a theme, such as "Operating a Small Business in Hong Kong" (for Business students), "The Basic Law and the Future of Hong Kong" (for students of Political Science), "New Immigrants from Mainland China" (for students studying Social Work), and so on.

Second, "Sheltered" courses: This kind of content-based instruction is only appropriate in university settings where the student population is very diverse, where, for example, there is a large number of foreign students; or where the universities are bound by government regulations to operate on an open-admissions system (as in the case of some large American state universities, see 4.2.6) and therefore take in students of a wide range of abilities. "Sheltered" courses therefore, are not suitable for a university such as HKU, in which the large majority of students come from similar backgrounds (see 1. 2.3), and for all of whom English is a second (and increasingly a foreign) language. (See Footnote 1 in "Introduction.")

The "Adjunct" Model: Given the present situation in HKU, regarding the rapid decline in English standards (as I have described in 1.3.3), students will, I believe, benefit enormously from such a model; but there are real-life difficulties--such as cooperation with the staff in the English Department, synchronizing contents between the courses offered in the English Department and those in the English Centre, and problems associated with assessment--that cannot be easily overcome. A compromise, therefore, is the model I am proposing in this thesis: discipline-specific modules to be offered in the second half of the EAS course, to be run solely by the English Centre itself.

### **2.3. Ways of Organizing a Literature Syllabus**

What I propose to do in this section is to describe some possible ways of organizing a literature syllabus, discuss their strengths and weaknesses, give examples of how these approaches underlie examinations or literature textbooks published in the last 30 years ago, and then discuss the relevance of these various approaches to HKU.

Shackleton (1992) has identified seven types of literature syllabus:

#### **2.3.1. Chronological**

In this kind of syllabus, texts are introduced chronologically. The Norton anthologies on English, American, and world literatures (Abrams (Ed.), 1975; Gottesman et al (Eds.), 1980; Baym et al (Eds.), 1994) are examples of textbooks that follow this tradition. Each of the anthologies is divided into historical sections; each of them begins with a short commentary of the "characteristics" of that period, and is followed by works of "representative" writers. Such an approach provides students with the general contours of a

map, where details can be filled in later. Its advantage is that, within a short period of time, students are provided with a bird's eye view of a national literature, so that they would be able to "place" individual works they will study later on into this overall framework.

I think this type of syllabus is particularly suitable for teaching situations where the literature being taught is a foreign literature; for example, English Literature in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. In China, the English literature curricula adopt this chronological approach (Cheng, 1987; Dzau, 1990; Ross, 1993; also see "Conclusion" of this thesis). Sometimes two textbooks are used together (Cheng, 1987; Chen, 1983, 1986): one about the historical background against which the literary works are written, and one containing selected pieces of literature. In Taiwan, the Ministry of Education stipulates that all in English departments (called Department of Foreign Languages and Literature or Department of Western Languages and Literature in some universities), a two-year survey course in British Literature, and a one-year survey course in American Literature be offered during the second, third and fourth years respectively (1).

This kind of courses has its limitations as well: because of its inherent nature, it is difficult for the teacher to examine a piece of literature in depth, and it is usually not possible to teach longer works, such as novels or epics. Because of the limitation of time, only shorter works, such as short stories or poems, or extracts of longer works can be taught. The problem with teaching extracts is that students may gain an incomplete, sometimes distorted view of the complete work itself (see Cook, 1986). Shackleton (1992) sums up the drawbacks and merits of courses that use this method: "When done well, such courses can be fascinating and informative. Connections can be made between developments in literature and cultural changes in many other fields of

life. When done badly, such a course runs the risk of becoming a list of odd facts, overgeneralization and disconnected names" (p.168).

### 2.3.2. Periodic

This type of syllabus focuses on certain periods; examples are 18th century drama, 19th century women writers, 20th century American poetry. It has the advantage of being more manageable than the survey approach, in the sense that it is more focused, and teachers and students have the time to teach and study both longer works and these works in greater depth. But the danger of this approach is that it might lead students to think that literature can be divided into little sections, and fail to see the connections between works belonging to different genres and periods. Examples of this type of textbooks include Charyn's (1969) *The Single Voice: An Anthology of Contemporary Fiction*; Stone, Packer, and Hoopes' (1976) *The Short Story: An Introduction*; and Bender et al 's (1977) *Modernism in Literature*.

### 2.3.3. Generic

This is an approach which classifies literary works into fiction, poetry, drama, and prose. Textbooks which adopt this approach include, among many others: Trilling's *The Experience of Literature* (1967), Brooks, Purser, and Warren's *An Approach to Literature* (1975), and Scholes, Comley, Klaus, and Silverman's *Elements of Literature* (1991). Influenced by the New Critics, these textbooks focus on the works themselves, and provide detailed discussion to guide the student-readers into a close reading and analysis of the literary works. For example, textbooks that deal with fiction are usually organized according to the so-called "elements of fiction"--setting, plot, characterization, theme, point of view, symbolism. In each section of these books, a few pages are devoted to the explanation of an element, and is then followed by a few stories that illustrate how that element functions in the stories. The

Introductory course offered in the English Department in the University of Hong Kong, called "Introduction to Literary Studies in English" (ILSE) follows this method.

Another way of categorizing literary works is to come up with sub-divisions within the literary genres, e.g., within fiction, there could be detective stories, science fiction, etc. Examples of these textbooks include: Stevick's *The Anti-story* (1971), which includes a collection of "experimental" stories; Philips' *Philosophy and Science Fiction* (1984), which examines a number of philosophical concepts in science fiction stories; and Baldick's *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (1992).

#### 2.3.4. Thematic

Syllabuses that are organized around themes contain works that either follow a chronological or non-chronological order. They focus on ideas and concepts, and therefore have the advantage of "pulling diverse threads together and making connections" (Shackleton, 1992:169). A potential danger of the approach, however, is that it might limit or ignore other possible interpretations of a piece of literature (because of its focus on a certain theme within the work itself). Examples of textbooks that follow this approach include: Canzoneri and Stegner's *Fiction and Analysis: Seven Major Themes* (1970), Carter's *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women* (1986), Park and Heaton's *Stories of Mothers and Daughters* (1988), and Young's *The Situation of the Short Story* (1993).

#### 2.3.5. Individual Writers

This kind of syllabus, which usually requires students to read the complete or a substantial selection of the works of a writer, gives students the opportunity to study the works of a literary figure in depth. The advantage of the approach

is that students will get to know a writer very well, but it has disadvantages as well: first, depth is secured at the expense of breadth; and second, making a choice (which author to select and why one author and not another) can be difficult. Courses that follow this kind of syllabus, it seems, are more suitable for advanced students in literature, who already have a broad understanding of a national literature. In HKU, as is true elsewhere, writers to be selected for these courses are usually determined by the expertise and interest of the faculty.

#### **2.3.6. Set Books**

This type of syllabus is usually found in public examinations, e.g., the British Advanced Level examination, and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) which is modelled after the British prototype. The advantage of prescribing set texts is that they can be studied in some detail--in Hong Kong, for example, students taking "English Literature" in their Advanced Level Examination study about 10 literary works in two years--where interpretive and critical skills can be developed (2).

But there are problems as well. Three of them are: first, the works to be selected are determined by a group of experts (such as an examination board) who are likely to have their biases. Until recently, for example, very few literary works outside the arena of "British" literature are included in the British Advanced Level syllabus (3); this is true as well for the syllabuses that follow the British model (example, those in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia). A second problem is that the syllabus encourages the view that "literature is a collection of universally acknowledged gems" (Shackleton, 1992:169). A third danger is that it discourages wide reading--this might have a specially acute effect on students who are examination-oriented and are reluctant to spend time on anything which lies outside the examination syllabus.



### 2.3.7. Literatures in English

This kind of syllabus is becoming more and more popular in English departments (Tatlow, 1982; Zach, 1990, 1992; Brumfit and Benton, 1993), especially in universities in former British colonies, such as Kenya, Nigeria, India, Malaysia, and Hong Kong (see 1.3.4., 1.3.5). A case in point is the present English Literature curriculum in HKU. During the academic year 1995-1996, the following courses have been offered: "Modern English and Modern Writing," which includes such books as Desai's *Games at Twilight*, Fenton's *Cambodian Poems*, Mo's *Sour Sweet*, Walcott's *Remembrance*; "Postcolonial Readings," which studies Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Rhy's *Wide Sargossa Sea*, and Rushdie's *East, West*; "The Family in Chinese American Literature," in which these works are discussed: Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Ng's *Bone*, Chin's *The Chickencoop ChinaMen*, Huang's *F.O.B.*, and Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea*. Teaching these works, especially if they are produced by writers of the country where they are studied, has a number of advantages. See 5.3 for my discussion on "localized literature."

Two other types of literature syllabus could be added to Shackleton's categories. They are the approach that enables students to study literary works in the light of the historical background against which they were produced, and the type that is built on modern literary theories.

### 2.3.8. Connections between literary works and their authors/backgrounds

In this kind of syllabus, the life of writers are being introduced, and the historical milieu in the which work was written is first described, before the work itself is studied. Examples of this type of textbooks include Konisberg's *The Classic Story* (1971), Charter's *The Story and Its Writer* (1991), and her

*Major Writers of Short Fiction: Stories and Commentaries* (1993). By teaching through this method, students are encouraged to see the link between history and literature, and to regard literary works as products of historical, social, cultural, religious, and philosophical forces that impinge upon a certain writer who lived in a certain age and time. This is the approach used in the universities in China, as its way of teaching literature is primarily Marxist. (See "Conclusion"). But critics such as the formalists, especially those belonging to the "Anglo-American" tradition of Formalism, are opposed to this way of viewing and reading literature. They believe that once a piece of work is produced, it is a separate entity, and should not be read or studied in connection to its producer, nor the socio-historical context in which it was produced (see 3.4.2).

Despite the Formalists' criticism, I think there is no reason why students should not be introduced to this approach. It is a useful way of understanding literature, as long as they are made aware of the fact that this is not the only way to read literature, and that there are critics who are vehemently opposed to it. (See 3.4.3).

#### **2.3.9. Modern Literary Theory and Works of Literature; and Stylistics**

In this approach, a literary theory is first introduced, such as formalist, structuralist, feminist, Marxist, psychological, or reader-response, and then students are shown how the theory could be relevant to the study of a literary work. Recent writers who advocate this approach include Griffith (1987), Calahan and Downing (Eds) (1991), and Peim (1993). Examples of textbooks that adopt this approach include, among others, Durant and Fabb's *Literary Studies in Action* (1990), Seldon and P. Widdowson's *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (1993), and its companion book, *Practising Theory and Reading Literature: An Introduction* (1989).

This approach has the advantage of providing students with methods with which they could approach literature, and perspectives (or, to borrow Ryken's (1985) term, "windows") through which students could look into in the world of literature. There are, however, at least two problems related to this method: first, similar to the "Periodic" approach (2.3.2), which arbitrarily divides literary history into "periods," this method tries to pigeon-hole theoretical writings into distinctive categories; such categorization could be far-fetched and artificial. Second, as much of literary theoretical writings were not written for pedagogical purposes, to translate them into teaching methods, if not carefully done, may distort the theories themselves, or make the translation exercise forced and unnatural.

A related method which has become increasingly popular in the last 20 years or so is "Stylistics." Courses of this sort teach students to make use of linguistic tools to analyze literature. Books which advocate this approach include H.G. Widdowson's *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature* (1975), Traugott and Pratt's *Linguistics for Students of Literature* (1980), Leech and Short's *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (1981), Carter's (Ed.) *Language and Literature* (1982), Cummings and Simmons's *The Language of Literature: A Stylistic Introduction to the Study of Literature* (1983), Short's (Ed.) *Reading, Analyzing and Teaching Literature* (1989), Carter and Simpson's (Eds.) *Language, Discourse and Literature* (1989), and H.G. Widdowson's *Practical Stylistics* (1992).

Stylistics is useful in raising learners' awareness of the unique nature of literary language (see, for example, H.G. Widdowson's (1975) method of comparing features of literary and non-literary texts) and for providing students with a set of tools with which to approach a literary text; it also helps students to

verbalize and explain their responses to others. But stylistics, like all "text-based" approaches, can be accused of ignoring the socio-historical backgrounds against which the literary works were produced; and for disregarding the reader who comes to the work with his own background, prejudices, and agenda (4).

Among the nine models discussed above, I think the generic approach is particularly appropriate for introductory courses in literature in a ESL/EFL setting, for it not only provides students with knowledge of literary works, but more importantly, it introduces students to methods of reading literature. Underlying the approach are, of course, certain literary theories. To introduce students to literary theories would enhance their understanding of theoretical bases that underlie the methods they are learning to use in order to read and analyze literature. The generic model does not, however, have the advantage of the chronological approach, where students can be given a broad overview of the historical development of a national literature. Such a bird's eye view is particularly important for students studying a "foreign" literature, for unlike "native" speakers, they may not have come into much contact with that particular literature until they arrive at university. I believe that the two approaches complement each other well: it would be ideal for a first year English curriculum (in a non-native speaker situation) to offer two courses simultaneously, one using the chronological, and the other the generic method. These might be called the "vertical" and "horizontal" approaches. Students will then gain a wide understanding of how a national literature has developed, and at the same time, have the chance to study some works at great length and acquire methods of approaching, responding to, as well as critiquing literature.

Naturally, as with many language syllabuses which combine different

pedagogical models, many real-life literature syllabuses make use of two or more of the nine models discussed above. It is certainly possible, for example, for curriculum developers to combine the generic approach with the chronological approach to form one course, in which literary theories are introduced, and where literature-based language instruction (on how to read and write about literature) is also provided.

But this ideal proposal cannot be easily realized in the HKU situation, the setting against which I am writing this thesis. Since I have no control over the ways courses are organized in the English Department in HKU (see "Definition of Scope" in "Introduction"), I can only concentrate on the module I propose to construct within the EAS course. Nevertheless, this module has wider applicability--it could be applied to situations outside Hong Kong, to, for example, similar academic situations in Taiwan, China, as well as elsewhere in Asia and the rest of the world. As the module is a content (literature)-based language course, it borrows ideas from both language and literature syllabuses. The literature side of it incorporates concepts from the generic approach as well as ideas from literary theories, as one of the most important objectives of the course is to teach students to approach literature, and to do so on their own. I believe these two approaches will provide students with some of the tools they need to attain this purpose. Furthermore, I have also chosen the single-author approach due mainly to the shortness of the course. It seems more realistic to ask students to concentrate on one writer and his (in my case, her) works, rather than to read works by different writers.

## 2.4. Planning Models

Having decided on which type(s) of syllabus, or a mixture of them, to use, one proceeds on to the practical steps of actually organizing it. At this stage, planning models are very useful: they help curriculum designers to set

objectives, choose content, select teaching methods, as well as decide on the means of evaluation for the course they are designing. In this section, I will discuss two such models; they represent two major traditions in the history of curriculum development.

#### **2.4.1. Tyler's "Means-End" Approach to Curriculum Development**

In his classic book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949), Tyler raises four "fundamental" questions he believes curriculum workers should consider. The first question is, "What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?" Tyler suggests that there are three major sources where the answer could be found; they are: the learners themselves, contemporary life outside the school, and suggestions about objectives from subject specialists.

When a number of potentially usable objectives are derived from these sources, philosophy and psychology are then used as screens to sieve off the important ones. To create the philosophical screen, Tyler advises curriculum developers to formulate an educational or school philosophy.

As for the creation of the psychological screen, the curriculum worker must clarify the principles of learning that he believes to be sound. Tyler explains that "a psychology of learning not only includes specific and definite findings but it also involves a unified formulation of a theory of learning which helps to outline the nature of the learning process, how it takes place, under what conditions, what sort of mechanisms operate and the like" (Tyler, 1949:41).

After the curriculum developer puts his list of objectives through the second screen, Tyler says, the list will be reduced, and only those which are most important will be retained. The next step is to state these objectives in

behavioral terms, thus making them instructional objectives that are to be achieved in the classroom.

The second question that Tyler raises is: "How can learning experiences be selected which are likely to be useful in attaining these objectives?" Tyler defines learning experiences as "the interaction between the learner and the external environment to which he can react" (Tyler, 1949:63). He suggests that teachers give attention to learning experiences that will "develop skills in thinking," that will be "helpful in acquiring information," and "helpful in developing interests." He asserts that learning experiences must be selected so that students have the opportunity to experience and complete the tasks required of them. He also suggests that while students carry out certain tasks, they must be able to gain satisfaction.

The third question that Tyler poses is: "How can learning experiences be organized according to effective instruction?" In this section, Tyler makes a number of suggestions. He advocates both "vertical organization"--learning experiences that are built on earlier ones; as well as "horizontal organization"--learning experiences that are reinforced for providing an effective organization, namely "continuity," "sequence," and "integration." In his view, the curriculum planner's responsibility is to first identify the concepts that are to be taught in a certain curriculum, then introduce the concepts to the students, and furthermore, reinforce the concepts in subsequent teaching units.

The fourth and last question that Tyler asks is: "How can the effectiveness of learning experiences be evaluated?" He suggests that evaluation should be carried out throughout a unit and not merely at the end. He says that evaluation involves getting evidence about behavioral changes in students and

that this should not be limited to results seen in tests. Other means of evaluation include techniques such as observation, interviews, questionnaires, and work samples.

Tyler's model was further modified by Taba (1962), his student at the University of Chicago. To Tyler's original paradigm, she added one more step, which is her first step--diagnosis of needs; she also provided specific details to each of Tyler's four steps. These additions are shown in the following diagram:

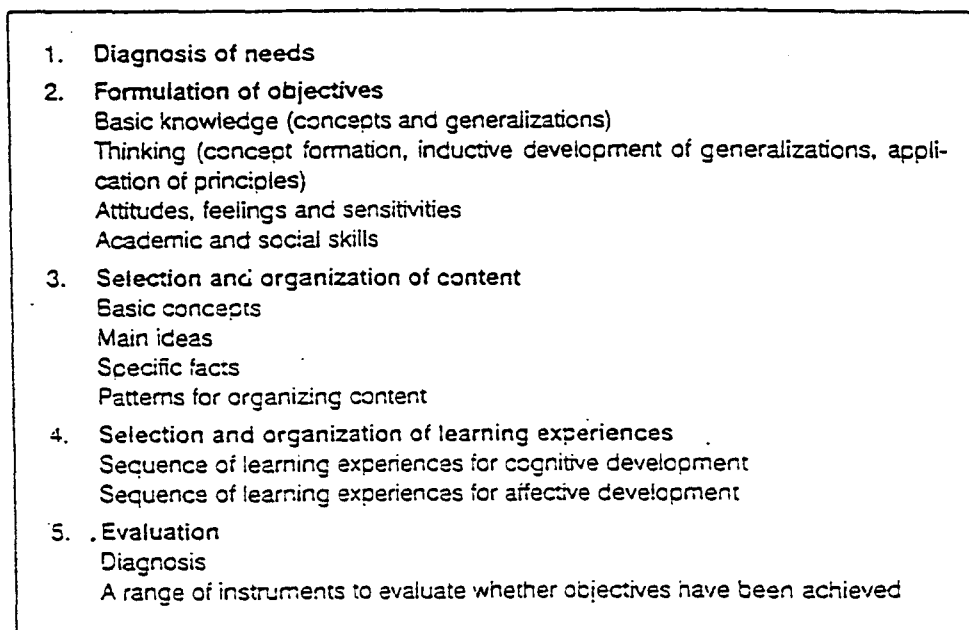


Fig. 5. Tyler's Model, as modified by Taba  
From: Marsh and Willis, 1995:89

Tyler's model appeared in 1949, but is still widely studied and used. Marsh and Morris (1991), for example, make this comment: "Tyler's book is such a



fine example of clarity that, after half a century, it is still included in any list of highly rated works in the field of education" (p.18). Marsh and Willis (1995) also document its popularity: "The book has been widely considered as such a fine example of common sense and clarity that after half a century, it is still in print and profoundly influences how curricula are planned and developed throughout the world" (p.12).

Tyler's model, however, has also been criticized. These criticisms focus mainly on the way Tyler discusses how objectives are formulated. Walker and Soltis (1986), for example, argue that Tyler's suggestion of using "contemporary society" as a source of information is too vague and simplistic, that society not only changes but is a very complex entity. Kliebard (1970) takes issue with Tyler's suggestion that subject specialists should be considered as a source of objectives. He contends that "learning subject matter is neither the only nor the highest purpose of education, and, therefore, the contributions of subject specialists would consist of defining how some purposes might be reached--but not what the highest purposes should be" (Marsh and Willis, 1995:15). Marsh and Morris (1991) point out that Tyler is ambiguous in his discussion of using philosophy and psychology as screens, that Tyler "throws the onus back upon the curriculum planner to make choices of objectives with very little guidance about how to undertake the task" (p.20).

I find many of these criticisms about Tyler being "ambiguous" and "unspecific" largely unjustified. Tyler's purpose is to provide a model to guide curriculum workers, and not a manual (with specific instructions) on how to operate a machine. It is only natural therefore that each curriculum developer who uses the model will have to make individual decisions regarding the following: what aspects of his own contemporary society he wants to investigate; to what extent he should rely on the expertise of subject specialists; and what kind(s)

of educational philosophy and theory of learning he subscribes to, before he formulates curricular objectives.

I think Tyler's model, together with Taba's added features, are practicable and useful in designing a curriculum. I have, in fact, followed the steps they suggested in the construction of a curriculum in designing the "Reading and Writing about Literature" module, as is presented in 6.2.

#### **2.4.2. Walker's "Deliberative" Approach**

Critics of the linear approaches (such as Tyler's) contend that curriculum construction does not occur in a neat and tidy manner. In the process of developing a curriculum, they argue, a number of interrelated factors come into play. Curriculum workers, they say, discuss, deliberate over, and sort out these factors in order to create a curriculum. Walker's "naturalistic" model (1971) is an example of this kind of approach. Different from Tyler's model, which is prescriptive, Walker's is descriptive; whereas Tyler assumes that good curriculum planning occurs when one follows a series of logical steps, Walker believes that good curriculum development will take place when the ones engaged in it understand the complexity of the process.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Walker studied how national curriculum projects were planned. As a participant observer of these projects, he carefully recorded the actions, arguments, and decisions of the various project teams. By analyzing the transcripts and other data, he was able to identify three phases of planning, which he subsequently terms "Platform," "Deliberation," and "Decision."

Walker's starting point, which is built on Schwab's (1969) ideas, is that "whenever people come together to engage in curriculum development, they always approach the task with their individual beliefs and values. They have

their own perceptions of the task, ideas about what the chief problems are, assertions about what should be prescribed, and commitments that they are prepared to pursue and argue about" (March and Willis, 1995:20).

Based on this idea, Walker argues that the first phase in curriculum development is to get everyone together, to share, discuss, and debate about what they think should go into a curriculum, and why. Walker calls this stage "platform." "Platform," he says, consists of conceptions (beliefs about what exists and what is possible), theories (beliefs about relations held between existing entities), and aims (beliefs about courses of action that are desirable)--these three categories are relatively well formulated. But "platform" also includes less carefully thought out notions; these he calls images (beliefs that something is desirable without specifying what), and procedures (beliefs about courses of action thought to be desirable without specifying why).

After having achieved consensus (to whatever extent), curriculum workers move into the next stage, which Walker calls "deliberation." This is the phase where alternatives are weighed against each other, discussed, and thought through. During this time, Walker says, "alternatives are often formulated and defended" before the issue is stated in clear terms. During this phase too, "[f]eelings run high. Personal preferences are expressed in the same breath with reasoned arguments" (Walker, 1971:55).

The "deliberation" stage ends when certain decisions are made; and the curriculum workers enter the "design" stage, where the decisions are translated into actual teaching materials. Walker's model and the various steps that it entails is shown in the following diagram:

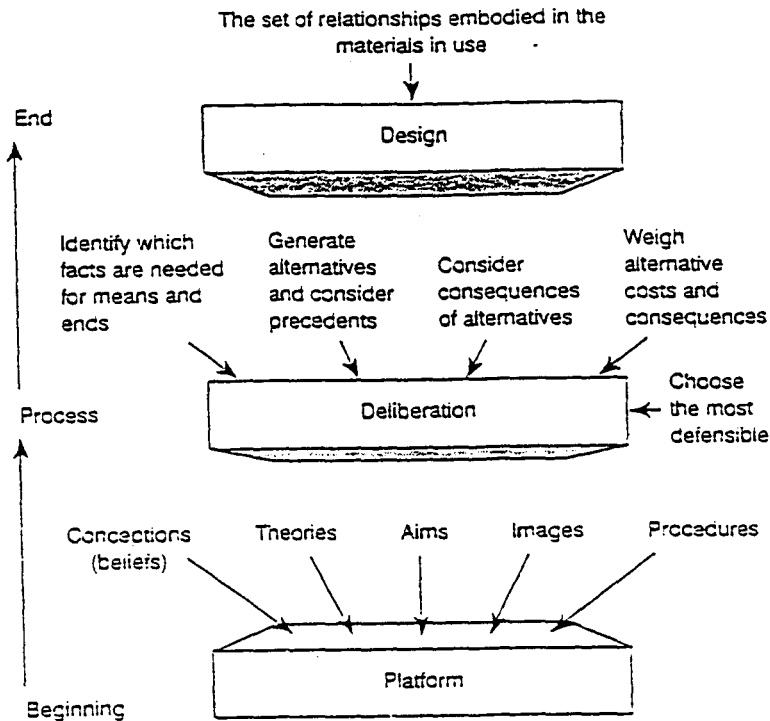


Fig. 6. Walker's Model  
From: Marsh and Willis, 1995:21

The naturalistic model tries to describe what actually happens during the process of curriculum development. It emphasizes the fact that the process is not linear and does not follow neatly formulated procedures. In this respect, in particular, the descriptive model differs from the prescriptive model. But there are other differences as well. Walker (1971) explains:

This [his own] model is primarily descriptive, whereas the classical model [Tyler's] is prescriptive. This model is basically a temporal one: it postulates a beginning (the platform), an end (the design), and a process (deliberation) by means of which the beginning progresses to the end. In contrast, the classical model is a means-end model: it postulates a desired end (the objective),

a means for attaining this end (the learning experience), and a process (evaluation) for determining whether the means does indeed bring about the end. The two models differ radically in the roles they assign to objectives and to evaluation in the process of curriculum development (pp.58-59).

Walker's model is valuable to curriculum developers because it provides them with a realistic picture of what actually happens in the process of producing a curriculum--the arguments and debates involved in reaching some kind of consensus, the use of deliberation to identify problems and consider possible solutions, and other problems that might occur during the process--and should, therefore, raise the awareness of curriculum developers concerning the difficulties they might face, the pitfalls they might fall into, and the kinds of danger they might encounter.

Walker's model, however, has two major limitations. First, Walker studied large-scale curriculum projects well funded by the government, and produced by full-time, well-trained educationalists. His model, therefore, may not be as applicable to smaller-scale, school-based curriculum projects, where funding is limited, and where the curriculum developers (usually teachers who already have heavy responsibilities) are not experts in the field of curriculum studies. In some cases, perhaps, teachers work alone to produce a syllabus; the group dynamics, which is so important in Walker's model, will have no relevance at all in these cases.

A second drawback the naturalistic approach suffers from is that it is directed almost exclusively to the planning of a curriculum. Walker does not go on to describe what happens after the curriculum is designed; for example, do teachers continue to deliberate about curriculum implementation, evaluation, or

even change?

Between the two models (or the two traditions) they represent, the Tyler-Taba paradigm seems to be more relevant to my attempt to build a literature-based language curriculum, for two reasons. First, it provides syllabus designers/materials writers with specific and concrete steps which they can follow. Moreover, I think it is more suitable for curriculum developers who are constructing a curriculum for the first time, when they do not have the benefit of hindsight, or past experiences on which to rely. Second, the Tyler-Taba model is more suitable for curriculum developers who are working alone. Walker's model assumes that a curriculum is constructed by a team of curriculum workers. That is why, I think, there is so much emphasis on debates, discussion, and deliberation. But in my case, I am the only syllabus designer and materials writer of the module; Walker's suggestions, therefore, seem less pertinent.

Nevertheless, in future, if my proposed curriculum is accepted by colleagues in the English Centre, or even by others within the University, then revision of the course, or the design of similar courses, could involve more material developers. At that stage, the ideas put forward by Walker would serve as useful references.

## **2.5. Application**

So far in this chapter, I have discussed four kinds of language syllabus, nine types of literature syllabus, and two planning models. In Chapter 6, I shall present a module which is built partly on the task-based, but mainly on the content-based language syllabus; as well as the genre-based, author-centered, and literary theory-based literature syllabuses. The concepts and content in the module are presented to students through the Tyler-Taba's curriculum

model.

## 2.6. Summary

In this chapter, I have focused on syllabus design and curriculum models. I pointed out at the beginning of the chapter that there are three components in the curriculum I try to construct in this thesis: that related to language teaching, to literature teaching, and to planning models through which syllabuses are channelled into the classroom. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into three parts. In the first section, I looked at the distinction between a "curriculum" and "syllabus" and explained the way I define these terms in this thesis: "curriculum" refers to the concept of introducing content (literature) based language modules into the EAS course in HKU; this curriculum encompasses a variety of "syllabuses," each of which might focus on one or more kinds of literary theory and literary materials. I continued to discuss two major types of language syllabuses (called by different language researchers as "synthetic" and "analytic" (Wilkins, 1976); Types A and B (White, 1988); "propositional plans" and "process plans" (Breen, 1987); product-oriented and process-oriented (Nunan, 1988)), and went on to look at four syllabuses that represent these two types; they are: the structural syllabus, the notional-functional syllabus, the task-based syllabus, and the content-based syllabus. I concluded this section by discussing the relevance of these syllabuses to the one I am proposing in this thesis. In the second section of this chapter, I turned my attention to literature syllabuses, and examined the strengths and weaknesses of nine of these: the chronological, the periodic, the generic, the thematic; those that focus on individual writers, set books, literatures in English, the connections between literary works and their authors/backgrounds, and the connection between modern literary theory and literary works, as well as stylistics. I contended at the end of the section that the generic approach, the author-based, and the study of literary theory are

the approaches that could most usefully be incorporated into the "Reading and Writing about Literature" which I shall describe in Chapter 6. In the third and last section of this chapter, I discussed two planning models, those of Tyler-Taba and Walker, which represent two traditions in curriculum planning, and suggested that the former model is more suitable for the curriculum I attempt to produce.



## Endnotes to Chapter 2

1. See, for example, National Taiwan University's 1996-1997 Bulletin, section on the description of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature.
2. For example, in the "English Literature" Examination syllabus in the 1997 Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), students who opt for the "Twentieth Century Literature" paper are required to study the following texts: D.H. Lawrence, *Selected Short Stories*; W.B. Yeats, "A Song," "Easter," "The Second Coming," "Sailing to Byzantium," "Leda and the Swan," "Among School Children"; Thom Gunn, "Incident on a Journey," "On the Move," "Black Jackets," "Considering the Snail," "My Sad Captains," "The Discovery of the Pacific," "Iron Landscapes"; Ted Hughes, "Hawk Roosting," "View of a Pig," "An Otter," "Pike," "Thistles," "Sheep," "Examination at the Womb-door"; and Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*.
3. See, for example, Gunner, 1984, who explains in her book that African literature written in English was not incorporated into the British Advanced Level English Literature Examinations until the mid-eighties.
4. Perhaps it needs to be mentioned here why "Stylistics," given its popularity in the last ten years or so, is not chosen as a teaching method for the module. As our students are advanced learners of English, the kinds of exercises suggested by some stylisticians for language learning, such as those included in H.G. Widdowson's *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature* (1975), and *Practical Stylistics* (1992) are too simple for our students. In order to introduce them properly to stylistics, it is necessary to first introduce them to linguistics, and then teach them how to apply the linguistic concepts to the study of literature. This method is exemplified, among other teachers, by Traugott and Pratt (1980)--whose textbook would take at least a term to get through. Such an endeavor then, fruitful as it might be, would take a great deal of time. Given the time the module has, this does not seem to be practicable.

# CHAPTER 3: READING MODELS, MODERN LITERARY THEORY, AND THE READING OF FICTION

## 3.1. Introduction:

In Chapter 2, I have looked at different types of language syllabus, literature syllabus, and curricular models, and have argued that the content-based syllabus and the Tyler-Taba paradigm are the most appropriate for a curriculum I am proposing. In this chapter and the next two, I shall turn to two other aspects of the curriculum: the two skills, namely reading and writing that the curriculum intends to teach; as well as the instructional materials that it uses. This chapter focuses on reading, and will be divided into two main parts: the first section (3.2 and 3.3) begins by defining how the term "reading" is used in this thesis, and goes on to discuss two models of reading--the cognitivist and the expressivist models (McCormick's (1994) terms). As the purpose of the thesis is not to examine "reading" in general, but specifically the reading of literature, in discussing these models, I shall, after briefly describing their central tenets, turn to the ways they look at the reading of literature. Although I shall concentrate on the reading of literature, I begin with a brief discussion of reading models so as to provide a background against which the reading of literature could be discussed--as the latter could be considered as a category within the former.

Since many of the pedagogical concepts related to literature-reading have originated from literary theory, as a logical sequel to the first part then, the second section of this chapter (3.4. and 3.5) discusses certain concepts of literary theory, and how they could be applied to the reading of literature. In

doing so, I shall not attempt to survey the various schools of thought (in the field of modern literary theory); instead, I shall, for reasons that will be explained in detail in 3.4, first focus on the "text-based" tradition within the history of modern literary theory, and then concentrate on three theorists, three theorists of literature teaching, and some of their works. The three theorists are Propp, Todorov, and Barthes (1); and the three pedagogues are Brooks, Purser, and Warren, who worked collaboratively.

### **3.2. Towards a Definition of "Reading" and "Readers"**

As I have explained under "Definition of Terms" in the "Introduction" of this thesis, "reading" in the context of this thesis refers not so much to reading skills in general, but to the reading of literature. Furthermore, it does not refer to reading about literature, as the title of the thesis might imply, but reading literary materials. Even more specifically, this thesis focuses on the reading of fiction, in particular, short fiction. The reason for my choosing short stories has been explained in the "Introduction to the Thesis," under "Organization of the Thesis."

The "readers" in this chapter refer to first-year students of English Literature in the University of Hong Kong (HKU) who are enrolled in the English for Arts Students (EAS) course. A small number of them have taken "English Literature" as a subject in the last two to four years in secondary school, but most of them are not familiar with the reading of "English" literature.

### **3.3. Two Models of Reading**

Following McCormick's (1994) terminology, I shall, in this section, look at two models of reading: the cognitivist and the expressivist. In broad terms, one might say that the former assumes that a reader is able to read through his knowledge of the language code and the writing system, that reading has

nothing to do with the reader as a social being, or the socio-cultural context in which he reads; the latter emphasizes the individual identity and role of the reader in the reading process, and recognizes the life experiences he brings to his reading. Although the concern of my thesis is to teach Chinese students in Hong Kong (for whom English is a second, and increasingly a foreign language) to read English literature, in discussing these models, I shall refer to a long-standing debate between two groups of reading theorists in America--those who advocate the teaching of phonics, and those who support the "whole language" movement--because this debate very clearly illustrates the central ideas in these two approaches to the teaching of reading. I shall then turn to two what I consider to be parallel models in the teaching of literature; these literature-reading models share the same theoretical underpinnings as the "cognitivist" and the "expressivist" reading models.

### **3.3.1. The Cognitivist Model**

Since the development of cognitive psychology in the 1960s, the cognitive model of reading processes has been "the most influential in reading research and pedagogy" (McCormick, 1994:15). Cognitive psychology (or cognitive science) is "an empirically based effort to answer long-standing epistemological questions--particularly those concerned with the nature of knowledge, its components, its sources, its development and its deployment" (Gardner, 1985:6). The cognitive approach to studying reading aims to dissect and quantify every aspect of the reading process. It sees the capacity to read as consisting of a hierarchy of skills, and assumes that a reader must be able to master a set of skills before he moves on to the next set. These skills begin with the recognition of letters and words, where reading is seen as "the translation of written elements into language" (Perfetti, 1984:42), and then advance on to more complex "thinking" and "comprehension" abilities. This view of reading has led to the idea of teaching students phonics before

teaching them to read for meaning (see Chall, 1983; Anderson et al, 1985). Research following this line studies reading "comprehension"--so as to teach it--on several levels: word, sentence, paragraph, story.

Associated with this view of reading is the so-called "Bottom-up" model of reading. Gough, one of the most prominent advocates of this model, drew evidence from laboratory work in which adults were engaged in letter and word recognition tasks. Based on these studies, Gough (1972) characterizes reading as "a letter-by-letter progression through text, with letter identification followed by the identification of sounds of the letters until words, their syntactic features and then meanings are finally accessed" (Davies, 1995:60). Models like Gough's are used to support phonic approaches to reading which focuses on letter-to-sound correspondence.

There are several weaknesses in Gough's model. First, as Smith (1971) has pointed out, the model does not take into consideration that there are at least 166 grapho-phonetic rules that cover the regular spelling-to-sound correspondences in English words, and that these are "not easy to teach" (p.xx). Second, the serial processing proposed by Gough is tedious and laborious, and imposes a heavy burden on the reader-student's short-term and working memory; he is also forced to focus on lower-level sources of information at the expense of other sources of information. Third, Gough ignores factors such as the reader's individual identity, the background information he brings to his reading, and the context in which he reads, as well as the effects these factors may have on the reader.

### **3.3.2. The Expressivist Model**

Expressivists see reading primarily as an activity in which readers create their own personal and subjective meanings from the texts they read. The

expressivists encourage students to develop their own "individual" and "authentic" responses to texts. This view of reading, as McCormick (1994:30) explains, is related to student-centered pedagogies whose roots could be traced to the educational theories of Rousseau and Dewey.

The works done by psycholinguists such as Smith and Goodman in elementary education in the U.S demonstrate the "expressivist" view of teaching reading. In broad terms, these researchers are against seeing reading as a hierarchy of skills; they are against reading programs and basal readers; and they are against always teaching by "direct instruction" (McCormick, 1994:31). In place of all this, they propose that children's literature should be used in the classroom; that children should be allowed to read a story without continual interruption from the teacher; that they should be encouraged to develop and discuss their responses to the stories they have read, and that they should be encouraged to work collaboratively on reading projects.

Smith's work in early reading acquisition illustrates this perspective. He sees reading as a "social practice," and not an isolated skill; he regards reading as a social phenomenon, and he contends that readers bring to the reading their whole life experience. He is opposed to the views (put forward by the cognitivists) that reading requires direct instruction and long periods of training and practice. Instead, he asserts that children "begin to read from the moment they become aware of the print in any meaningful way" and that "the roots of reading are discernible whenever children strive to make sense of print, before they are able to recognize many of the actual words" (1983:38).

Furthermore, Smith argues that reading is a process that is owned by the reader and that it has a connection with the rest of the reader's life. Reading, therefore, should not be seen as a special kind of activity, but rather, "one that

involves far broader aspects of human thought and behavior" (1988:3). Based on this belief, Smith is opposed to the preparatory reading lessons, for he thinks that reading is an active process, and readers should take the lead in it. For the same reason, he is also against prescriptive reading programs; instead, he advocates that students should be allowed to choose their own books and read without all kinds of "intrusions" from the teacher; such "intrusions" could include pre-reading activities, the teaching of specific skills or strategies, or post-reading tests.

Smith's model of reading has several limitations. One of the most serious is that while he argues that "learning to read does not require memorization of letter names, or phonic rules, or large lists of words" (1988:179), he is not able to say what exactly what reading does involve. His statement--"It should not be a cause for dismay that we cannot say with exactitude what a child has to learn in order to read" (1988:180)--is not a very satisfactory answer to those who query his approach. Smith's inability to define what readers need to know in order to read is due partly to the fact that he has not considered--at least not thoroughly enough--the social conditions in which texts are produced, and those in which readers read. He simply assumes that the right educational conditions would invoke students' innate abilities to read. He seems to have confused the acquisition of speech with that of reading ability: while the former is acquired naturally, the latter is not. Furthermore, he does not address the issue that readers coming from different social classes, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic, indeed, national, origins would bring to their readings different "background information."

### **3.3.3. Approaches to the Reading of Literature**

The debate between the "cognitivist" and "expressivist" approaches to the teaching of reading, as outlined above, is paralleled, to some extent, by two

approaches to the teaching of the reading of literature. The split here is between the "reader-response" critics, such as Louise Rosenblatt and her "descendents" (for example, Norman Holland, David Bleich, Alan Purves), representing a line of thought that privileges the reader and his individuality in the reading process; and the line of criticism coming down from I.A. Richards, F.R. Leavis, and the scholars associated with *Scrutiny*, as well as the American New Critics, (whom Richards influenced) which led to the concentration on "practical criticism" and "close reading,"--to which I will first turn.

What is central to this approach to reading literature is a "profound, almost reverential regard for literary works themselves," it shows "an obsessive concern for 'the text itself,' 'the words on the page,' 'nothing more or less'; with literary works as icons of human value deployed against 20th century cultural barbarism; or as an 'objective,' 'scientific,' 'disinterested' (Arnold's word) criticism of the text" (Selden and P. Widdowson, 1993:10-11). Another way of looking at the approach is to describe it in negative terms; this is how Stevens and Stewart (1992) put it: "...a hostility to biographical and historical evidence and to any other information that invites the reader to look beyond the text itself and, perhaps as a consequence, an inability to go beyond formal analysis and discuss a literary work's broader significance and its relation to life" (p.13).

Major concepts connected with this approach are "Practical Criticism," associated with ' A. Richards; "close reading," developed by F.R. Leavis and the Scrutineers; "intentional fallacy" and "affective fallacy" discussed by the American New Critics. The Richards-Leavis/New Critical way of reading consists roughly of the following ideas, put together and paraphrased by Durant and Fabb (1992:25):

" 1. Received opinion about literature obscures actual contact with the text; and



the best way to get round this is to strip away context and accumulated opinion: to read closely for [oneself].

2. Seeing what happens when such close reading takes place reveals things about the 'state of culture'; about how people read and about what assumptions underlie attributions of value to literary texts.
3. Reading in the 'new critical' way develops *techniques* of reading, by foregrounding the process of reading and enabling discussion of specific aspects of the text, such as irony, paradox, etc.
4. Reading literature is valuable because in literary uses of language, feelings and perceptions are combined in complex, sometimes contradictory ways. These enable us to draw on *all* the resources of language, and also lead to mental processes of combining and resolving contradictions and tensions at 'higher' levels. The personal ability to produce coherence out of such complexity is considered a valuable psychological resource.
5. Reading literature is valuable because it helps us resist an imperilment of 'culture' and protects us, in a changing world, from popular culture and tastes."

Durant and Fabb (1992) go on to explain that since "practical criticism" has undergone much evolution since Richards's days, an activity called "practical criticism" can take any of these three forms:

- " 1. [Carrying out] a 'dating' exercise or puzzle (working out, from features of style, topic, theme, etc., what period a text or extract was written in--even possibly by whom).
2. Discussion of impressions or response, based on sensitivity to the style of the text, and leading towards critical evaluation.
  3. [Conducting] a task of stylistic analysis, examining 'clues' in the style of the text in systematic ways to support--or create--'readings' or 'interpretations,' then comparing these interpretations and exploring the

textual evidence for each (p.26)."

"Practical Criticism" has, perhaps, been the most widely used teaching method in literature classroom in Britain, the U.S., and other parts of the world. There are at least three reasons that account for its popularity: first, it encourages close reading of texts, which prevents students from "getting away" with casual, superficial readings of literary works--the assumption here, of course, is that the works students read are valuable and that they will "learn" (either in terms of the acquisition of vocabulary, ideas etc., or the training of their critical and analytical abilities) more if they read the texts carefully and attentively. Second, in educational systems where examinations play an important role, "practical criticism" offers a more "objective" way of evaluating students' understanding of literature as their response is based on an "objective" text, which everyone shares, rather than "subjective" experiences, which are owned by different individuals. A third and related point is that it encourages, in Selden and P. Widdowson's (1993) words, "a kind of democratization of literary study in the classroom, in which nearly everyone [is] placed on an equal footing in the face of a 'blind' text." (p.13).

The major limitation of the approach, however, is that it places a literary work in a vacuum, and refuses to look at the socio-historical contexts in which it is produced. This insistence poses a serious difficulty for the teaching of literature to students for whom the literature being taught is "foreign"--this is a point I will return to when I discuss Brooks, Purser, and Warren, and their work *An Approach to Literature* in 3.4.3.

Unlike the Cambridge scholars, and later on the American New Critics (to be discussed in 3.4.2.), reader-response critics argue for the active role played by the reader and for his being the creator of meaning of a text. This also

means that they challenge the notion that the text is an objective, independent entity that contains meaning to be discovered. Holland (1975), coming from the psychoanalytic tradition, argues that texts are products of a reader's "identity theme" and that they provide no constraints on interpretation. Writing from a phenomenological tradition, Iser (1978) maintains a more balanced view between the text and the reader, and distinguishes between the "text"--the words on the printed page, and the "aesthetic object"--the imaginative realization of the text by the individual reader. Rosenblatt (1978), in proposing the "transactional" view of reading, encourages students of literature to read in an "aesthetic" fashion; in this way, Rosenblatt argues, the text becomes the reader's, created not from the words on paper alone, but also from the associations and memories brought to it.

The works of reader-response critics have led to teaching practices different from those which are based firmly on "Practical Criticism" (and New Criticism). The study of literature is no longer seen as an exercise where students must "understand correctly" the meanings which are embedded in the texts. Instead, there are, as Langer (1992:37) puts it, "a horizon of possibilities" within which students are free to respond personally and emotionally. Based on this view, Bleich (1978) developed a pedagogy which is centered on the "response statement." This is an informal essay in which students record "the perception of a reading experience and its natural, spontaneous consequences, among which are feelings, or affects, and preremptory memories of thoughts, or free associations" (p.147).

While this kind of response pedagogy appears to give students a voice, to say what they want to say, it does not provide the means through which students can come to understand what factors determine that voice, and therefore leave them powerless both to develop and to question it. The limitation of this kind

of instruction has stemmed from a problem that also characterizes the "expressivist" approach to reading literature: while it emphasizes the reader's individuality, it seems to have neglected the fact that the reader is a social subject, who comes from a certain background and reads within a social context; similarly, it also fails to recognize that the text is a product of certain social conditions.

In the past 20 years or so, however, there is greater awareness that both the reader and the text should be discussed within social contexts. Fish's (1980) notion of "interpretive communities," for example, is a recognition that readers need to be situated in broader social-cultural contexts. But Fish does not seem to address "how these communities develop, how a reader becomes a member of one, and how membership in diverse and contradictory communities affects reading" (McCormick, 1994:41). Fetterley's (1978) feminist reader-response theory seems to go further than Fish's in recognizing the social construction of subjectivities. She encourages female readers to resist the "male" positions that literary texts, and the larger socio-cultural context, lure them to take up: "The first act of the feminist critic must be to become a resisting rather than an assenting reader and, by this refusal to assent, to begin the process of exorcizing the male mind that has been implanted in us" (p.xxii). In saying that a "male mind" is "implanted" in female readers, Fetterley acknowledges that subjectivities are socially constructed, yet her notions of "male" and "female" seem rather simplistic.

These modifications of "subjective criticism" seem to be successful only to a certain extent, because, as McCormick (1994) explains:

they are working from an inadequately developed theory of the reader and text in history. Thus, they contradictorily tend to fall

back on expressivist theories of the subject which simply assume that one can learn all one needs to know about one's subjectivity merely from introspection, and objectivist theories of the text which assume that meanings exist in the text outside of the context in which it is read. While students taught from a modified response perspective are encouraged to explore the text and their personal beliefs in more detail than Bleich's student, since they are given little access to discourses that would enable them to reconceive of readers and texts, their reactions to the text and their analyses of their own subject positions remain as impressionistic and often as uninformed as they were in early reader-response approaches (p. 42).

These approaches have also been criticized by other literary theorists and critics. Selden (1989), for example, points out that although reader-centered criticism challenges the New Critical notion of the autonomous text, it "preserve[s] notions of identity and selfhood which remain within the humanist discourse of New Criticism" (109). Eagleton (1983) argues that reader-response criticism fails to take into account the extent to which all responses "are deeply imbricated with the kinds of social and historical individuals we are" (p.89). Belsey (1980) contends that reader-response criticism offers "the reader's intuition as a new source of authority" but does not take into consideration, in theoretical terms, "the relationship between experience and language, ideology and history" (p.34).

So far I have presented two reading models and, parallelling these models, two approaches to the teaching of literature: one privileges the text and argues that the application of "correct" reading skills will yield "correct" readings of texts; the other privileges the reader, and argues that it is the reader who

bestows meaning on the text. The next question to ask is: Which approach is more suitable for the Hong Kong context?

The expressivist approach, at first sight, seems to be an attractive option, for, as I have mentioned (or will mention) at several points in other chapters of the thesis (e.g., in the "Personal Introduction," 1.3.1, 3.4.3, 5.3, 6.2.1), one of the major purposes of the new curriculum is to enable students to read literature independently, and to articulate their responses to what they have read in a critical manner. But then there is another important factor that must be taken into consideration, and this is related to the institutional reality in which we and our students function: we (literature teachers) teach, and our students learn within an institution which is governed by policies and constrained by regulations. Students need to pass examinations in order to graduate from this university. We may wish to help students develop their "personal" voices (as the expressivist approach encourages them to do), but these students also need to pass examinations within an institution that requires them not so much to express personal feelings, but to write essays that are based on "close reading" of literary texts--and these answers should be substantiated by "evidence" from the texts they read. (See Appendix 3b for a selected sample of first-year English Literature Examination questions in the last 35 years). Based on this contention, I argue that the "Cognitivist" approach to the reading of literature is more suitable for the HKU context. Moreover, and based on the same contention, I argue further, in the next section, that introducing students to "text-based" approaches (within the realm of modern literary theory) is not only justified but important.

### **3.4. Modern Literary Theory and the Reading of Fiction**

In this section, I shall look at literary theory for the purpose of finding out to what extent these theories could have possible implications for teaching

literature (2); more specifically, I wish to see if, based on these theories, exercises could be constructed to teach students to read fiction. I will first briefly describe three loosely defined approaches to literature in the history of modern literary theory. I will then describe, in slightly greater detail, the "text-based " tradition, and will finally focus on three theorists and three teachers within this tradition; they are: Propp, Todorov, and Barthes; Brooks, Purser, and Warren, who collaborated in producing several important textbooks on the teaching of literature. I have chosen to concentrate on the "text-based" tradition (as detailed in Cook, 1994:125-156) for this is the dominant way "English" Literature has been taught in the universities in Hong Kong, as I have explained in 3.3.3. I have chosen to focus on Propp, Todorov, and Barthes, as well as Brooks, Purser and Warren because they all share an interest in and theorize about the nature of narratives; and are widely cited and anthologized as leading narrative theorists (e.g., Eagleton, 1983; Jefferson and Robey, 1986; Stevens and Stewart, 1992; Selden and P. Widdowson, 1993; Cook, 1994) As a syllabus I plan to write (presented in Chapter 6) is based on several short stories, there is much that I can borrow from the concepts they discuss in their works.

#### **3.4.1. Modern Literary Theory: A Brief Sketch**

To take the risk of oversimplifying matters, one can say that the history of modern literary theory can roughly be divided into three periods: the first phase is preoccupied with the author, the second phase is marked by a concern for text, and the third phase focuses on the reader (Eagleton, 1983:74; Longman III, 1987:13-45; Webster, 1990:17-18; Selden and P. Widdowson, 1993:4-6). Naturally, such categorization and classification grossly simplify the complex web of intricate relationships between the different literary theories, and the so-called phases actually overlap each other. The danger of such attempts to rigidly categorize literary theories has,

for example, been pointed out by Cook (1994:127). Yet, such an organization provides a useful framework within which my discussion of a particular cluster of theories could be launched.

### **3.4.2. The "Text-based" Tradition**

Speaking in general terms, writers on modern literary theory usually include in this "tradition" three important movements: Russian Formalism, Anglo-American Formalism, and Structuralism and, to a limited extent, Post-structuralism (see, for example, Longman III:25-37; Webster, 1990:30-54; Stevens and Stewart, 1992:11-46). In this section, I shall briefly describe some of the important ideas and names associated with these movements. Before proceeding on to the discussion, there are three points that need to be made: first, I am aware of the fact that different writers/scholars define such terms as "Formalism" and "Structuralism" differently, and therefore there is no attempt on my part to discuss them as absolute, precisely defined entities; instead, they will be looked at as broad literary movements which are associated with certain views on literature. Second, my brief description of Russian Formalism, Anglo-American Formalism, Structuralism, and Post-structuralism--the last of which I shall touch on slightly-- will primarily be descriptive; it serves as a kind of map on which the six theorists and pedagogues will be pinpointed; there will be more discussion when I look at these individual theorists/pedagogues and their works and ideas. Third, in looking at these theories, the perspective I take is that of a literature teacher, and not a literary critic; I shall therefore focus my discussion not so much on the nature of the theories themselves, but on the implications these theories have for teaching--although, again, I am aware of the fact that the theorists I am going to discuss are not--except for the American New Critics-- pedagogues, and did not write their theories for teaching purposes.



## Russian Formalism

The "Russian Formalists" consisted of two groups of critics and students: the Opojaz (The Society for the Study of Poetic Language), based in St. Petersburg; and the Moscow Linguistic Group, based in Moscow. Both groups were active immediately before and after the Bolshevik revolution (Selden and P. Widdowson, 1993:28-29). The Opojaz group, who were dissatisfied with the existing form of literary study, and interested in the poetry of Russian Futurists, had, as their leader, the theorist Shklovsky; other prominent members included Eikhenbaum, Brik, and Tynyanov. The Muscovites, the most famous of whom was Roman Jakobson, were mostly linguists who were interested in extending the field of linguistics to cover poetic language (Jefferson, 1986a:24). Although the interests and the concerns of the two groups are not completely the same, "the theoretical value of their work is best understood and appreciated as a collective effort to establish a coherent theoretical basis for literary studies" (Jefferson, 1986a:24). Due to political oppression, the intellectual activities of the groups came to an end before 1930, although the ideas of Russian Formalism continued to be developed in the Prague Linguistic Circle, one of whose members, Jakobson, had left Moscow for Czechoslovakia in 1920. The group, including such members as Mukarovsky and Troubetzkoy, was formed in 1926, but disintegrated in 1939, again, as a result of political events. They did not significantly change the basic groundwork laid down by the Russian Formalists, and in general terms, their "work can be read as a restatement of the late Formalist position" (Jefferson, 1986a:25).

The major concepts associated with Russian Formalism can perhaps be expressed in terms of what they rejected, and what they had established. They rejected biographical information and authors' individual circumstances as important in the study of literary works; they also rejected the "current

symbolist definition of art as 'thinking in images'..., and the perennial Aristotelian view of art as mimesis" (Cook, 1994:131). On the other hand, concerned that the study of literature should not be considered as secondary to, and loosely attached to such disciplines as philosophy, history, psychology, aesthetics, ethnography, sociology, and so on, the formalists directed their efforts toward establishing an independent existence of literary studies. They wanted to "put literary studies on an independent footing,... to make the study of literature an autonomous and specific discipline" (Jefferson, 1986a:25) and chose to do this by defining literature in differential or oppositional terms: "what constitutes literature is simply its difference from other orders of facts" (Jefferson, 1986a:27).

To establish the uniqueness of literature, and the "literariness" of literary language, the important concept of "defamiliarization" (*ostranenie*: "making strange") was introduced by Shklovsky. The concept of "defamiliarization" expresses "the idea that the function of literature is to restore freshness to perception which has become habitual or automated: to make things strange, to make us see them anew" (Cook, 1994:131). Other ideas related to this central concept within "Russian Formalism" are: the concept of "impeded form," a feature in literary writing that makes the reader slow down, that prevents automatized perception; the concept of "bared form," which draws the reader's attention "to the artistry rather than the illusionary subject matter" (Cook, 1994:133); and the concept of "sjuzet," (as opposed to "fabula") which violates the "real" sequence of events in a narrative, so as to prevent the reader from regarding chronology of events as typical and familiar (Selden and P. Widdowson, 1993:34).

Although, due to historical circumstances, the development of Russian Formalism appears to have been "an isolated and localized phenomenon" (Jefferson, 1986a:25), it does have an important influence on other literary

movements later in the 20th century. For example, Jakobson, after his stay in Prague, left for the United States, and through his teaching and work there, was to exert considerable influence on the field of literary studies and linguistics in America. Second, Russian Formalism was to play a significant role in the development of Parisian structuralism in the 1960s: "The structuralist desire to establish a poetics distinct from other academic disciplines, their scientific ideals, and, on a more detailed level, their work on narrative theory, all owe a considerable debt to Russian Formalism" (Jefferson, 1986a:25). Todorov was to do the same in France (Scholes, 1974).

### Anglo-American Formalism

A slightly later, but parallel movement in Britain and in the United States, while the Russian Formalists were active in Russia and then in Prague, was "Anglo-American Formalism." Names associated with this movement in Britain include I.A. Richards, and closely connected with him, F.R. Leavis, and William Empson. As "Practical Criticism," a way of reading literature advocated by these British scholars, has been discussed in some detail in 3.3.3., I shall not repeat it here. Instead, I shall focus on "American New Criticism." The New Critics, who began writing in the late 1930s, also advocated such ideas as the "objectivity" of the text; the "independence" of a literary work from its author and the background against which it is produced; as well as the importance of "close reading." In a way, they are descendants of Richards; in another sense, they diverged from the tradition that Richards started in the 1920s. Robey (1986) explains the relationship between them:

The American New Critics remained true to the spirit of Richards's work by emphasizing the distinctive properties of literature or poetry, and by dealing with them in a way which was not only empiricist, humanistic, and organicist, but also theoretical as well.

Their conception of literature differed from his, however, on at least one fundamental point: they were much less interested in the experience of reading than in the objective features of the medium, the literary text itself; and they therefore spent much less time on evaluation than on description and analysis (pp.79-80).

Some of the prominent New Critics are John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, W.K. Wimsatt, and Robert Penn Warren. The primary tenets of the new critics could be expressed in both positive and negative terms: the literary work is self-sufficient; the author's intention, and the reader's affect are not important. These major characteristics have implications for the reader who approaches a literary text the "new critical" way: first, he will not seek extrinsic or outside information; he will not place the author in an authoritative position; even if the author has something to say about his "own" work, his comments will still be examined "objectively" in the light of the work itself. Second, he will need to read the text closely in order to discover the inter-related "elements" within the literary work. In the study of poetry, he will look for poetic ambiguity (multiple meanings), tension, irony, paradox; in the study of fiction, he will look for the so-called "structural elements" of fiction.

Substantiating the ideas of the importance of the text, and the unimportance of the author as well as the reader in the process of reading and interpreting literature are two concepts discussed in two important essays written by Wimsatt and Beardsley, published in *Sewanee Review* in 1946 and 1949 respectively (now collected in Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1954:1-39). The first essay, which presents the concept of "the intentional fallacy," argues that if a critic/reader tries to "derive the standards of criticism from the causes of the poem," then he ends in biography. The second essay, which presents the concept of "the affective fallacy," contends that if one tries to "derive the

standards of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem," then one ends in impressionism and relativism. In a later section in this chapter, I shall discuss how the New Critics apply their ideas to the study of fiction.

Specifically, I will look at Brooks, Purser, and Warren's discussion of the "elements" of and the "organic unity" in fiction in their textbook *An Approach to Literature* (1975).

### Structuralism and Post-structuralism

Structuralism shares with Anglo-American Formalism "a close attention to the literary text and an attempt to account for its features" (Stevens and Stewart, 1992:33). But, it differs from Anglo-American Formalism in several significant ways, as Jefferson (1986b) explains:

It does not share the New Critics' preoccupation with meaning, and its attention to the signifiers of literature is never subordinated to any signified. Furthermore, the relationship between literature and language in the structuralist view is not primarily a negative or oppositional one, as it is in Formalist theory; in accordance with the basic principles of structuralist theory, the relationship between the two is one of parallelism, to use a structuralist term, homology. Literature (in the same way as kinship systems) is organized at every level *like* language, and it is a central part of structuralist purpose to reveal the similarity (p.95).

This similarity between literature and language is explained by Culler, who says that the purpose of structuralist theoretical work is the development of "a poetics which would stand to literature as linguistics stands to language and which therefore would not seek to explain what individual works mean but

would attempt to make explicit the system of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do" (foreword to Genette's *Narrative Discourse*, 1980:8).

As Culler's statement suggests, the methodology and much of the vocabulary of structuralism have come from linguistics. A profound influence on structuralist criticism are the three central concepts delineated in the works of Ferdinand de Saussure (1916). They are: the distinction between "langue" and "parole"; the related concepts of the "signifier," the "signified," and the "sign"; and the distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations.

Literary theorists have borrowed these ideas and apply them to the study of literature. For example, they borrow the ideas of "parole" and "langue" to study literary works: just as linguistics is not concerned with individual utterances (parole) but with the language system as a whole (langue), the structuralist sees individual works as examples of parole, which are informed by rules which belong to a general literary genre. In other words, "[p]oetics is concerned with a general grammar of literature which will be only partially visible in any individual work...just as linguistics ought to be able to account for the structure and organization of as yet unspoken sentences, so poetics ought to be able to account for the rules governing as yet unwritten works of literature..." (Jefferson, 1986b:96-97). Works that have attempted to construct such "grammars" of literature include Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), and Todorov's *The Poetics of Prose* (1977), which are discussed in greater detail in 3.4.3.

It is also important here to mention Barthes's *S/Z*, which, as Jefferson (1986b) explains, "represents a break both with poetics and with criticism." (3) With the appearance of *S/Z*, "[p]oetics is replaced by a basic evaluative typology of

texts, and criticism by commentary (in this case of a short story by Balzac called "Sarrasine")" (p.107). Barthes sees the relationship between the general and individual texts differently from those critics associated with poetics. He questions the structural practice of seeing individual texts as microcosms of a general poetics, of using the "indifferent gaze of science" to force them to "rejoin, inductively, the Copy form which we will then make them derive" (Barthes,1975:3). Barthes suggests an alternative, which is the evaluative typology set out in *S/Z*. The features of this approach and how it differs from poetics are explained very clearly by Jefferson (1986b):

[This approach] privileges the writing of the text, and sees it not as a structure or as a copy of a structure (poetics) but as a practice. The static, closed image of the literary text that goes with the concept of structure is replaced by a dynamic, open one which is expressed in concepts like play and practice. All that remain of the Saussurean model is the primacy of language and an emphasis on the signifier, both of which are even more strongly asserted here than in poetics. The notions of system and homology are gone; neither literature in general nor individual texts are thought of as systems, and consequently analogies with linguistic structures do not apply. Literature does not copy language any more than it copies reality (p.108).

Barthes's *S/Z* is described in greater detail in 3.4.3., and, based on some of the concepts in there, an exercise is designed to introduce students to yet another way of reading fiction. The exercise is presented in 6.2.1. (Unit 4).

### **3.4.3. Propp, Todorov, Barthes; Brooks, Purser, and Warren, and their works**

### Propp: Morphology of the Folktale

Propp's identification of the elements of the Russian fairy tale in *Morphology of the Folktale* is one of the most important works in the "Formalist" tradition. (Although some would consider Propp a structuralist, e.g., Scholes, 1974:91; Hawkes, 1977:67; Longman III, 1987:33). Propp ([1928], 1968) defines "morphology" as "... a description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole" (p.19). Propp arrived at a classification system of studying folktales by using the inductive, rather than the deductive method. In other words, he came up with the classification through a thorough examination of a number of Russian fairy tales, rather than simply made assumptions.

His system includes, first of all, seven recurring categories of characters: the villain, the donor or provider, the helper, the sought-for person and her father, the dispatcher, the hero, and the false hero. The term "character" might be misleading since it refers to certain roles rather than individuals who take these roles. Propp uses the phrase "spheres of action" to emphasize that these categories are concerned with actions that are taken, and not only with individuals who act (Stevens and Stewart, 1992:35). Thus, for instance, different individuals can perform acts of villainy or acts of help; conversely, a single character can serve in several spheres of action, for example, as a donor at one point and a helper at another.

A second important component in Propp's system is what he calls "functions." A "function" is "...an act of character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (Propp, 1968:21). Propp proposed 31 of such functions; as they appear in stories, they are governed by the following rules:

1. Functions of character serve as stable, constant elements in a tale,



independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled.

2. The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited.
3. The sequence of functions is rule-governed, although not all functions appear in all tales.
4. All fairy tales are of one type in regard to structure.

The following are the first seven of Propp's functions:

1. "Abstention": One of the members of a family absents himself from home.
2. "Interdiction": an interdiction is addressed to the hero or heroine.
3. "Violation": The interdiction is violated.
4. "Reconnaissance": the villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance.
5. "Delivery": The villain receives information about his or her victim.
6. "Trickery": The villain attempts to deceive the victim in order to take possession of the victim or of his belongings.
7. "Complicity": The victim submits to deception and thereby helps his enemy.

These seven functions are followed by another 24, all of which are explained in detail by Propp.

Propp's classification system is indeed very comprehensive, but to what extent could it be turned into a pedagogical method? First, there are limitations to this method that must be addressed. "Scientific" and detailed as Propp's method may appear to be, it seems rather difficult to apply to stories other than Russian folktales. Furthermore, Propp did not write this work with the intention of teaching literature students how to read fiction. What relevance then, does Propp's work have for Chinese university students in Hong Kong, and how is introducing Propp's method, written some 70 years ago in Russia to Chinese students in Asia in the 1990s justified? I think there are at least two answers to these questions. The first has to do with the importance of the concept of "genre" in literary studies, and the need to introduce it to students (passive understanding); the second is related to students' ability to identify

and analyze genres in other literary works they will encounter in their study of literature (active application).

First, the importance of "genre" in literary studies: (4) Critics who are associated with the "Chicago school" of criticism (e.g., R.S. Crane, Elder Olson, Sheldon Sacks) argue that "genre" is of utmost importance to a writer, for the aim of a literary type determines a work's individual parts (Stevens and Stewart, 1992:22-23). According to these critics, a writer needs to first determine the kind of artistic object he intends to create before he could consider other elements of the work. As Crane (1953) puts it: "to what extent, and with what degree of artistic compulsion, any of the particular things the writer has done at the various levels of his writing, down to the details of his imagery and language, can be seen to follow from the special requirements or opportunities which the kind of whole he is making presents to him" (p.16). Another argument that supports the importance of "genre" in literary studies is related not so much to the writer, but to the reader. Many structuralist critics are concerned with the way in which expectations about a genre govern the reading of a work. Culler (1975), for example, contends that a genre "serves as a norm or expectation to guide the reader in his encounter with the text" (p.136). According to Culler, genres constitute a "contract" between writer and reader: a person has different expectations for a novel, a poem, a news report, or a computer manual, and therefore read them differently.

It seems important then, that students be familiarized with the concept of "genre." In my case, in the context of this thesis, introducing this concept to students through the study of Propp's work will help them to become more aware of the underlying structure of literary works they read. Moreover, they will learn to raise questions in their own reading: for example, they will learn to question why a fairy tale is a fairy tale, or why a detective story is a detective

story, and so on, instead of taking these familiar genres for granted.

The second advantage of "using" Propp's work to introduce students to the idea of genre is that they will learn to use the method to analyze other literary works. Besides becoming passively aware of types of structures in narratives, students could also be encouraged to imitate Propp's method and actively identify elements that underlie other fictional types. Furthermore, they could be challenged to query why a certain genre is suitable for a certain type of text; or how a "traditional" text type could be used to serve a "modern" purpose. For example, one of the stories students will read in the module I present in Chapter 6 is Maxine Hong Kingston's "White Tigers." (See 5.5.1. for a summary and discussion of the story). In constructing this tale, Kingston follows the traditional story line in a "wuxia" (swordsman) novel (these stories are usually set in the Chinese historical past, and include characters who live in remote mountains and who possess magical powers). Students in Hong Kong are very familiar with this kind of novels and will, I believe, immediately recognize the genre. In the exercises that follow the reading of "White Tigers," I asked students to identify the features that characterize a "wuxia" novel; I then asked them to explain why they think Kingston has chosen this "traditional" genre to convey a rather "contemporary" message: the feminist cry and struggle for more power and equality with men in both the family and in society. (See Chapter 6 which contains both the exercises--based on Propp's work and applied to Kingston's story, as well as a discussion of students' response to the exercises).

### Brooks, Purser, and Warren: An Approach to Literature

The American New Critics and their ideas of close reading, discovery of the meaning of a text by induction, regarding a piece of literature as an objective, independent entity had profound influence on the way literature was taught in

Britain and the U.S.A. from the 1930s to the 1970s (Matheison, 1985). The textbooks written by Brooks, Warren, and their colleagues (*An Approach to Literature* (1975) by Brooks, Purser, and Warren; *Understanding Poetry* ([1938], 1960) by Brooks and Warren; *Understanding Fiction* ([1943], 1971) by Brooks and Warren; and *Understanding Drama* ([1945], 1972) by Brooks and Heilman) were widely used in the colleges and universities in the United States and in Britain. In this part, I will look at Brooks, Purser and Warren's discussion of what they consider to be the major "elements" of fiction, and how an introduction to these "elements" in a literature class could help students to read fiction more effectively.

In a section entitled "The Structure of Fiction," in *An Approach to Literature* (1975), the textbook writers explain that when a writer sets out to write a story, he begins the process by putting the materials into an "expressive structure" (p.5). The most important thing about this "expressive structure" is that it has unity, within which there are structural elements. These elements are meaningful only when they are looked upon as relating to and interacting with other elements within the "vital unity of an individual story or novel" (p.5).

Brooks, Purser, and Warren have proposed seven kinds of "structural elements" in fiction; they are: action, plot, character, scene and atmosphere, point of view, style, and theme. These elements are delineated as follows:

- Action: An action is not a particular act, deed, or event; it is not a mere sequence of such items, but a "sequence of items bearing a significant and developing relation to one another" (p.6). This developing relation consists of several stages: a Beginning, a Middle, and an End. The "beginning" must contain a "conflict," which threatens the stability and status quo, which characterizes the fictional world when the story begins. The "middle" describes a series of events that move from the unstable situation towards a

certain state of stability. The "end" shows the achievement of stability: the conflicts having been resolved, the fictional world returns to a state of harmony.

Although the events in a "real" (e.g., "historical") story have to occur in chronological fashion (as in "action"), fictional events (as in "plot"), can be narrated in any order: "The action is the raw material of plot. It is the story behind the story as we find it formed into fiction. The plot is the action as we find it projected, by whatever selection of events and distortion of chronology, into the fiction that we [the readers] actually confront" (p.7). A "plot" is usually composed of three stages: "exposition," where readers are provided with the necessary "background information," so that they will be prepared for the development of the story; "complication," where the "conflict" or "conflicts" appear, which leads (or lead) to a climax, when the intensity of the conflicts reaches its highest point; and finally "denouement," when the "conflicts" are gradually resolved and finally "untied." The distinction between "action" and "plot" is similar to that between "fabula" and "sjuzet," as has been discussed in 3.4.2 under "Russian Formalism."

- Character: Another structural element that interacts with "plot" and "action" and contributes to the unity of a story is "character." "Character" can be discussed on two levels: first, it acts upon action (or plot) by providing a rationale for the development of the action; in other words, characters propel the action forward. On the second level, "character" is being acted upon by "action": characters are affected by the events in the story and are as a result of the events, being changed.

- Scene and Atmosphere: "Scene" is a "quite specifically identifiable place" (p.10), whereas "atmosphere" is a "metaphor for a feeling or impression that

*we may associate with a place but may be created by other means" (p.10).*

"Scene" does not only serve the function of providing readers with the information related to the physical setting of the story, it also provokes a certain atmosphere that affects the characters; the characters, who are being affected, in turn, contribute to the movement of the plot. While it is true that a scene usually creates an atmosphere, "atmosphere" does not necessarily depend on scene or setting; it could, for example, depend, instead, on the language the writer uses. "Scene" and "atmosphere" then, are structural elements which are related to "action," "plot" and "character," and are part of the overall fictional "unity."

- Point of view: Intimately related to "action" (or "plot"), "character," "scene and atmosphere" is "point of view." What and how much the readers "see" and how the readers will "hear" the story depends on the point of view adopted by the writer. In fact, says Brooks and his co-writers, a writer cannot start writing a story unless he has first answered the question, "Who tells the story?" There are, theoretically at least, an indefinite number of possible "points of view," but Brooks et al point out two major types: The first type, the "first person point of view," has the advantage of providing the writer with "built-in selectivity"; that is, since the narrator is conditioned by his background, education, class, gender, etc., the writer can simply tell the story according to what is relevant to the narrator's "nature and role."

In the second type, the "omniscient point of view," the omniscient narrator is all-knowing; he sees all the details in the external environment, he also understands the secrets in the hearts of all the characters. A writer adopting this point of view enjoys the benefit of having a narrator who can almost describe or say anything; but he has to deal with the problem of selectivity, for the omniscient third person point of view lays the burden on the writer to

decide what materials to choose, for he has "no ready-made scheme, no principle, by which to organize his material" (p.12). He must then decide what materials to include in the story.

The concept of "point of view" is discussed by other theorists. For example, when discussing the idea of "internal speech," Leech and Short (1981) mention the idea of "slipping," where the author "slips from narrative statement to interior portrayal without the reader noticing what has occurred" (p.340). Another example is Cook's (1994) discussion of "skaz," which he defines as "the manner of narration, the apparent attitude of the narrator" (p.135). "Skaz" is important, Cook points out, because it might alter the genre of a narrative altogether: "[a] police report, a poem, and a personal anecdote may all describe the same incident, but their *skaz* will be radically different" (1994:135).

- Style: Closely related to "point of view" is "style," for even when a writer has chosen a point of view, he must further decide what voice the character speaks in. Brooks et al suggest four possible choices: first, the narrator uses his own personal voice; second, the narrator uses the voice of a character through whom he speaks; third, the narrator uses the voice of a character who is not, strictly speaking, the narrator, but whose consciousness is being penetrated; fourth, the narrator modifies and "flavors" his language so as to give the feeling that the atmosphere being conveyed is congruent with the "world" in which the story happens.

-Theme: The last, and perhaps the most important element in the structural unity, is "theme." Brooks et al define "theme" as the "governing idea implicit in the original situation of conflict that becomes, in the end, the focal idea--that is, what we take to be 'meaning' of the whole" (p.15). "Theme," according to

Brooks et al, is the most important element in the organic unity because "the theme is the story...Only in so far as the theme is implicit in the other elements and in the dynamic progression, can the story be said, in the fictional sense, to exist at all" (p.17). They emphasize the importance of "theme" by saying that "theme" is not only content; it is also the principle by which other elements are related. If a story is compared to a wheel, then the other six structural elements are spokes which are connected to the "theme," which is the hub. It unites the story, which would otherwise fall apart.

I find the "New Critical" approach extremely useful in teaching "English" Literature to students who are studying it as a foreign literature, and I shall elaborate on this later. First, however, I shall point out some of the limitations of this approach. Critics belonging to the "writer-based" tradition challenge the new critics' view that one should not look beyond the text when interpreting literary works. Hirsch (1960), for example, argues that a literary text is not a "piece of language" to be examined in isolation. Rather, the text, Hirsch says, "represents the determinate verbal meaning of an author," and the task of the interpreter is to discover that meaning by using all the resources available to him. Since several interpretations might be possible for a literary work, in order to demonstrate that one interpretation is more convincing than another, the reader must try to "verify" it with "extrinsic data" to show that a certain interpretation is more consistent with "the author's typical outlook, the typical associations and expectations which form in part the context of his utterance" (pp.476-478). What Hirsch says is justified, of course, but this does not render the New Critics' point of view "wrong," for Hirsch and the New Critics are arguing from two different premises: one begins with the premise that "extrinsic data" are needed to understand a text; and the other that meaning can be (and can only be) discovered in the text alone. It seems futile, therefore, to say that Hirsch's position is correct, the new critics' incorrect, or



vice versa. But the point I do want to make here is that, from the point of view of literature pedagogy (especially the teaching of "foreign" literature), it is both difficult and unnecessary to deliberately "keep out" "extrinsic data." In cases where historical events, names, places, etc., are mentioned in a piece of literary work, it is so much easier for the "foreign" student to enter into the "world" of the work ( e.g., a story) when the historical, geographical, religious backgrounds of the work are first introduced. It is, for example, almost impossible for a Chinese student who has never been to Ireland to understand Joyce's *Ulysses* without some introduction to the city of Dublin or Irish society at the turn of the century. To intentionally exclude "outside" information can cause unnecessary difficulty and frustration on the part of the students.

Critics coming from the "Reader-based" tradition criticize the New Critics on very different grounds. As has been pointed out in 3.3.3, critics such as Rosenblatt, Holland, and Bleich have argued that a reader is a social being who interacts with the text to create meaning; even the same reader can read the same text differently at different times because his age, knowledge, experiences in life, etc., have changed. Another and related reason for objecting to the idea that one can or should read a literary work without any reference to anything "outside" it is put forward by Graff (1970). Graff's contention can be summarized as follows: critics such as Brooks and Warren try to maintain the view of the autonomy of literary works by arguing that the reader should judge them only on the basis of their internal consistency, in other words, one does not ask whether one agrees with the speech a character makes, or the statement of a poem; instead, one asks if the speech is consistent with the character or the statement with the rest of the poem. But then, Graff contends, one's ideas about consistency itself are derived from knowledge of people, experiences, and ideas outside the work (Stevens and Stewart, 1992:18-19). The argument that a reader brings his own background,

experiences, and personal feelings to any reading he does is a contention, I think, that is difficult to refute, for readers, after all, are human beings, not serial computers who can concentrate on one "file" at a time, and temporarily ignore the existence of other "files." The human brain works differently.

Despite these objections, and despite extreme criticisms such as those raised by critics such as Webster (1979) (who declares that "Formalist values seem totally irrelevant to almost everyone" (203)), the formalist approach--the Anglo-American Formalist approach--I believe, is still a very valuable and powerful pedagogical method. In the context of HKU, for example, teaching students to read fiction by introducing them to the "elements" of fiction discussed above can benefit students in at least three ways: first, students would be forced to read works of fiction carefully instead of just gaining a vague and superficial impression of the stories and then respond to them by using their own experiences (as "subjective criticism" would probably allow to them to do). Second, the approach provides them with "tools" to study and analyze other literary works. One kind of remark we often hear from students is that they enjoy hearing their lecturers explicate texts in class, but they are frustrated by the fact that they cannot do so on their own. The approach will provide them with one means by which they could produce their own interpretation of the work. Third, as I have explained in 1.3.4, a survey of the examination questions in first-year English Literature examinations in HKU in the last 35 year or so, and as recent as the 1990s, show that teachers (and examiners) still rely very heavily on the formalist approach when it comes to the assessment of students' ability to read literature. This is understandable: it is certainly easier, and indeed, fairer, to judge students if there are "correct" answers, or at least, if the response is based on "objective" evidence from the text itself, rather than solely on one's own personal experiences, beliefs, or opinions. This is a point I have already made towards the end of 3.3.3.

I conclude this section by making two points: First, although the New Critical approach to the teaching of literature is considered by some to be old-fashioned and out-dated, I think it is still a very useful pedagogical method, especially for the teaching of "English" literature to foreign students. But I also believe that, pedagogically, it is unnecessary to insist on totally excluding "extrinsic" information when such information helps to enhance students' understanding as well as interest of literary texts.

Second, in a syllabus that I design (see Chapter 6), I attempt to apply this approach to a story by Maxine Hong Kingston entitled "The Father from China." The story is a relatively straight-forward episodic narrative about the "Father"--from his birth to his settlement in California. It is, I think, very appropriate for showing students how identifying the "structural elements" (as explained by Brooks et al) in the story could help them to understand the "unity" of the story. I discuss the story and how it could serve as pedagogical material in 5.5.2. and 6.2.1.

### Todorov and *The Poetics of Prose*

The works of Todorov mark another important point in the tradition of the "text-based" approaches to literature. Todorov is an important figure in the history of modern literary theory for many reasons, one of which is that he stands as a bridge between the Russian Formalists, whose works he anthologized (Todorov, 1966), and the narratologists, who emerged in the 1960s and the 1970s, whose works he influenced (Scholes, 1974; Hawkes, 1977).

Todorov attempts to formulate structuralist approaches to literature into a theory of poetics and discusses his concepts in two important books,

*Grammaire du Decameron* (1969), and *The Fantastic: A Structuralist Approach to a Literary Genre* (trans. by R. Howard, 1975). Many of these concepts are condensed into essays which are included in *The Poetics of Prose* (trans. by R. Howard, 1977). What I will do in this section is to select five principles Todorov delineates in these essays, summarize them, and discuss their possible implications for the teaching of literature in the HKU context.

Todorov's *The Poetics of Prose* contains 15 essays. Jonathan Culler, in his forward to R. Howard's translation of the book (1977), divides the essays into four groups: the first group, which includes "Language and Literature," "Poetics and Criticism," "An Introduction to Verisimilitude," and "How to Read?" deals with, in Culler's words, "the general nature of poetics, its relation to other critical activities, and its basic concepts" (p.9). To Todorov, explains Culler, "poetics is not concerned with extraliterary causes or referents" (p.10), and should be differentiated from "projection," which is criticism that treats literary works as records of human experience. Moreover, as poetics is concerned with general theory and not the interpretation of individual works, it is thus different from "commentary"; furthermore, poetics is not "interpretation," which "attempts an integrated reading of a given work by translating the text into another set of terms which represent its meaning" (p.10).

The second group contains two essays, "The Grammar of Narrative" and "Narrative Transformations." These essays introduce the readers to Todorov's concepts of plot structures and narratives. The third group, which includes "The Typology of Detective Fiction," "Primitive Narrative," and "Narrative-Men" deals with the idea of "genre." In these essays, Todorov provides "categories for the description of a narrative genre" (p.11).

In the fourth group are essays that are related to individual authors or works ("Speech according to Constant," "The Ghosts of Henry James," "Art according to Artaud," "The Quest of Narrative," "The Secret of Narrative," and "Number, Letter, Word."). The fact that Todorov discusses categories of poetics in these essays seems to contradict the distinction he makes between "poetics" and "commentary" as well as "interpretation.". Culler (in Todorov, 1977) explains this apparent contradiction by referring to Todorov's essay entitled "How to Read?" He says,

Reading, as [Todorov] describes it, involves "superposition," and "figuration": comparing works or passages from a single work with one another in order to discover common figures or configurations. Reading, [Todorov] says, presupposes poetics, in that the reader must have a sense of what he is looking for, but on the other hand the reader does not simply apply the categories of poetics to a text; he does not simply note the presence or absence of attested literary devices and procedures. Reading involves, rather, the discovery of how a given work employs, modifies, parodies, and implicitly comments upon the signifying procedures defined by poetics. What Todorov calls reading is in fact a criticism guided and informed by poetics (p.12).

The five principles I have selected for discussion include: the distinction between "sjuzet" and "fabula"; the distinction between "enonce" and "enonciation," the idea of "figuration," "the grammar of narrative," and the concept of "genre."

Principle 1: The distinction between "sjuzet" and "fabula": these concepts are

not Todorov's inventions. Yet, they are mentioned because for Todorov, these are important concepts on which he builds some of his own theories. The distinction between the two terms was originally made by the Russian Formalists. (See 3.4.2). They see the former as the notional story in chronological sequence and the latter as the order of events that occur in the story, the sequence (of events), in this case, is determined by the writer (Cook, 1994:134). The distinction was further elaborated by Emile Benveniste into one between "histoire" (an apparently self-organized narration that does not seem to have an overt narrator, and does not have in mind a specific audience) and "discours" (a narration in which there are an assumed narrator and an assumed audience) (Selden and P. Widdowson, 1993:127).

Principle 2: The distinction between the enonce and the enonciation: Todorov carries the Russian Formalists' (and Benveniste) ideas further and distinguishes between the subjects of the "enonce" and the subject of the "enonciation." To the first group belong the characters within a narrative who are also narrators; the second group includes the voice of the author/narrator. This is how Todorov (1977) explains these concepts:

The one who says *I* in the novel is not the *I* of discourse, that is, the subject of the speech-act. He is only a character, and the status of his words (direct style) gives them a maximum objectivity, instead of bringing them closer to the subject of the actual speech-act. But there exists another *I*, an *I* generally invisible, which refers to the narrator, that "poetic personality" we apprehend through the discourse. Hence there is a dialectic of personality and impersonality, between the *I* of the narrator (implicit) and the *he* of the character (which can be an explicit *I*), between discourse and story. Here is the whole problem of

"point of view": in the degree of transparency of the impersonal *he* of the story in relation to the *I* of discourse (p.27).

With this distinction, Todorov identifies three more types of narrators. The first type are the narrators who attach themselves to one of the characters in the story and observe everything through his "eyes." The second kind are omniscient narrators who know everything--here "discourse transplants story" (Todorov, 1977:27). The third type of narrators know nothing about their characters, but merely see their movements and gestures, hear their voices, "here story supplants discourse" (Todorov, 1977:27).

Principle 3: "Figuration": "Figuration" is reading to discover a central structure that governs all levels of discourse in the text. Among the examples that Todorov gives of "figuration" are three related concepts: antithesis (between pairs of characters who possess opposite physical appearances and personalities), parallelism (between pairs of characters who perform similar actions), and gradation, a notion that expresses the idea that "...several members of the family share the same character traits, but to varying degrees (Todorov, 1977:22).

Todorov (1977) emphasizes the fact that it is the reader, who is also the critic, and not the author, who produces these "figurations" and selects points of focalization which

will be chosen as a consequence of their role in the work, not of their place in the author's psyche... If a reading did not privilege certain points of the text, it could be rapidly exhausted: the "right" reading of the work would be settled once and for all. The choice of axes and nodes, which can vary infinitely, produces

in return the variety of our readings: it is this choice which makes us speak of a more or less rich reading (and not simply a true or false one), of a more or less appropriate strategy (p.239).

Principle 4: The grammar of narrative: Todorov's starting point is that "if we admit the existence of a universal grammar, we must no longer limit it to languages alone. It will have, evidently a psychological reality;... This psychological reality makes plausible the existence of the same structure elsewhere in speech" (pp.108-109).

One of the major elements in this narrative grammar is related to the development of a story. Todorov (1977) explains the structure in an "ideal narrative":

The minimal complete plot consists in the passage from one equilibrium to another. An "ideal" narrative begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power of force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical (p.111).

Todorov's theory can be paraphrased in this way: a narrative consists of a "equilibrium," which is upset by a "dis-equilibrium," and results in a "modified equilibrium." This movement is called a "complete trajectory" (p.118), although, as Todorov explains, some narratives reveal only part of this trajectory. Furthermore, he distinguishes between two types of episodes: "those which describe a state (of equilibrium or of disequilibrium) and those



which describe the passage from one state to the other" (p.111). He uses parts of speech to represent these two types of episodes: Narrative "adjectives" are those predicates which describe states of equilibrium, narrative "verbs" those which describe the passage from one time to another (p.111).

Principle 5: Genre: For Todorov, "genre" is closely related to reading:

... in the perspective of reading, the text is both the product of a system of pre-existing literary categories, and the transformation of this same system; the new text modifies the very combination-reservoir of which it is the product, it changes not only the order of application of the rules, but their nature (pp.239-240).

In other words, all texts, to different degrees, belong to a certain genre, and at the same time, transform genre. Genre, then, is both a mode of narration and a way of reading. Genre requires both writer and reader to work with a system of rules, a framework of some sort. During the process of writing and reading, these rules are either confirmed or frustrated. In discussing the concept of genre, Todorov is at pains to draw attention to the similarities and differences between adjacent genres. Two examples from Todorov's works will help to illustrate this difference. First, in his work "The Fantastic in Fiction," (trans. by V. Mylne, 1970), Todorov distinguishes between the characteristics of this genre and those as seen in the "uncanny" and the "marvellous." Second, in his essay "The Typology of Detective Fiction" (in *The Poetics of Prose*), he makes a distinction between "whodunit" and the "thriller" and the "suspense novel" (Todorov, 1977:42-47). He does this by regulating and classifying generic features of similarity, and by emphasizing that

[t]he task of a reading always consists, to a greater or lesser degree, not in obliterating difference, but in taking it apart, in presenting it as an *effect of difference* whose functioning can be known" (Todorov, 1977:237).

In Chapter 6, I describe an attempt to turn these principles into exercises which are then applied to the analysis of a short story by Maxine Hong Kingston called "No Name Woman." (See 5.5.1 for a summary and discussion of the story). The story, though short, is a complicated one: it has two inter-mingled voices, two worlds, several versions of the "same" story, different attitudes towards the "same" event and person, and a "genre" that waves between history, fantasy, and self-introspection. Todorov's five principles, I believe, will help students understand the structure that underlies the story, and clarify for them many of the intricate details that might at first sight seem complicated and confusing.

Specifically, the first principle (the distinction between "sjuzet" and "fabula") will help students to "sort out" the "real" chronology of the events as they "happened," and will encourage them to consider why the writer has arranged these events in this particular sequence. The second principle (the distinction between "enonce" and "enonciation") will help students to distinguish between the two voices--the Mother's and the Daughter's, the difference of which is not always easy to hear. The third principle (the concept of "figuration") will help students to understand the Father's, the Mother's, and the Daughter's attitudes toward the Aunt, as well as the similarities and differences between their attitudes. The fourth principle ("the grammar of narrative: or structure") will help students to see the complicated web of elements that underlie the story. Finally, the fifth principle ("the grammar of narrative: genre") will enable students to ponder over this question: is it possible to categorize the story as

belonging to a certain genre? If the answer to the question is yes, then why has Kingston chosen to use this genre, or a combination of these genres? If the answer is no, then students must say why not: is it possible for a story not to belong to any genre at all?

### Barthes: S/Z

Barthes is a versatile and prolific writer who has written on a wide range of subjects. Culler (1990), for example, calls him a literary historian, mythologist, critic, polemicist, semiologist, structuralist, hedonist, writer, and man of letters. In this thesis, I concentrate on one particular aspect of Barthes's theory, i.e., the dissection of a piece of work by transforming it from a "lisible" (readerly) work to a "scriptible" (writerly) text. I consider this aspect of Barthes's work a part of the "text-based" tradition in the history of modern literary theory, but a significant step forward, or extension, of "Structuralism." Culler (1990) explains this in the following way: he first identifies what he considers to be the four "aspects of structuralist study of literature": The first aspect is the attempt to "describe the language of literature in linguistic terms so as to capture the distinctiveness of literary structures" (p.80); the second aspect is "the development of a 'narratology' that identifies the constituents of narrative and their possible combinations in different narrative techniques" (p.80); the third aspect is the attempt to "show how literary meaning depends upon the codes produced by prior discourses of a culture" (p.81); and the fourth aspect is the attempt to promote "analysis of the reader's role in producing meaning and of the ways literary works achieve their effects by resisting or complying with readers' expectations" (p.81). The first two aspects, Culler goes on to explain, had been treated by Russian Formalists such as Propp and French structuralists such as Todorov, (whom I have discussed in earlier sections). Barthes, especially in his work *S/Z*, Culler says, (which I shall discuss later), has made significant contributions to the

last two aspects. In this way then, Barthes could be said to be entering the "territory" of post-structuralism.

In discussing Barthes's concept of transforming a "lisible" work into a "scriptible" text, it is necessary to mention four of his notional antitheses which occupy an important position in his literary theory. These antitheses are: the "écrivain" vs the "écrivain"; the "lisible" work vs the "scriptible" text; the concept of "plaisir" vs the notion of "jouissance"; and "work" vs "text" (Hawkes, 1977: 112-115).

First, the distinction between the "écrivain" and "écrivain." The former refers to a writer who transmits a message, and uses language as his medium; the latter, on the other hand, is the writer who concentrates his attention on the medium of transmission, i.e., language itself. Second, the distinction between the "lisible" work and the "scriptible" text. Briefly put, the "lisible" work is produced by the writer, to be consumed by the reader. It is therefore considered to be "readerly." The "scriptible" text, on the other hand, requires the reader to re-formulate, in fact, reproduce it as he reads it. It is therefore called the "writerly" text. Third, Barthes distinguishes between "plaisir" from "jouissance." The first term refers to the pleasure the reader gets when he consumes the "lisible" work, and the second alludes to a kind of difficult, uncomfortable pleasure (the word "jouissance" is of course associated with sexual pleasure) that the reader obtains while he labors to produce the "scriptible" text. Finally, Barthes marks the difference between a piece of "work" and a "text." He explains:

...the work is concrete, occupying a portion of book-space (in a library, for example); the text, on the other hand, is a methodological field...it is experienced in an activity, a production

(quoted in Harari, 1979:74-75).

Barthes demonstrates the process of transforming a "lisible" work, which gives plaisir, to a "scriptible" text, which leads to jouissance, in his book *S/Z*. In this book, Barthes analyzes a short story by Balzac entitled "Sarrasine" by applying a method he calls "starring." ("Starring" is a method by which a reader re-creates a text by using a system of codes, which is explained in the next section of this chapter). By doing so, Barthes demonstrates how the fictional piece is actually not a unified object, as it appears to be, but rather the weaving together of many different voices. Barthes explains that the purpose of the activity is not so much to identify the "real" structure of the story but to enjoy its plurality. His argument is that

[i]f we want to remain attentive to the plural of a text (however limited it may be), we must renounce structuring this text in large masses, as was done by classical rhetoric and by secondary school explication: no *construction* of the text: everything signifies ceaselessly and several times, but without being delegated to a great final ensemble, to an ultimate structure (Barthes, 1975:11-12).

As Scholes (1974) has pointed out, in conducting this kind of analysis, there are two problems that need first to be dealt with: first, how to arrange and divide the text; and second, how to organize the interpretive materials. With the first problem, Barthes chooses to go through the text, and divides it into 561 "lexies," (or "lexia") or meaning-units. He ignores the incidents or episodes, which provide the obvious "structural" divisions of the text; he even ignores divisions of the discourse such as sentences and paragraphs. Instead, what he does is cut the text up "into a series of brief, contiguous

fragments"; this cutting up, he says, is "arbitrary in the extreme" (Barthes, 1975:13). As a result, the "lexies" "will include sometimes a few words, sometimes several sentences; it will be a matter of convenience: it will suffice that that the lexia be the best possible space in which we can observe meanings" (Barthes, 1975:13). Scholes (1974) explains that the purpose in doing this is to "emphasize that the process of reading is linear--through the text from left to right--and also involves our movement from the text out to the various codifications of the world invoked by it" (p.152).

This way of dividing the text, Barthes thinks, will broaden the concept of "structure" and increase the degree of flexibility that the structuralist allows. He explains:

..to work on the unique text down to its least details, is to resume the structural analysis of fiction at the point where it is presently stopped--at the large structures; it is to give it the power (the time, the ease) to follow the capillaries of meaning, to leave no significant spot without presenting the code that it may be connected to..." (quoted in Scholes, 1974:152).

The way that Barthes proceeds then, is to quote a few words of "Sarrasine" (a "lexie"), and then comment on its various "significations" and then move on to the next "lexie." He also digresses from time to time, to discuss the more general implications raised by the lexie or the sequence of lexies (Scholes, 1974:152). Scholes uses the digression Number LXXI to show what a digression looks like as well as the function it serves in the interpretive process. This digression follows Lexie 414, which describes the way Zambinella is embraced by Sarrasine in a carriage as they travel to Frascati. A reader reading the story for the first time will probably assume that Zambinella

is a woman. A reader reading the story for the second time knows that Zambinella is actually a castrato. This reading leads to a digression, and Barthes comments:

The second reading. Beneath that transparent cover of suspense imposed on the text by the first reader, avid and ignorant, a second reading locates a knowledge based on the anticipation of the issue of the story. This other reading--unduly censured by the commercial imperatives of our society which oblige us to squander the book, to throw it away on the pretext that it is deflowered, so that we may buy another--this retrospective reading gives to the kiss of Sarrasine a precious enormity. Sarrasine embraces passionately a *castrato* (or a boy transvestite); the castration imprints itself on the very body of Sarrasine, and we others, second readers, we receive the shock of it. It would be false, therefore, to say that if we agree to re-read a text it is for an intellectual profit (to understand better, to analyze with knowledge of the cause); it is in fact and always for an increase in pleasure; it is to multiply the signifiers, not to attain some ultimate of the signified" (quoted in Scholes, 1974: 153).

The second step that Barthes has to take while trying to undertake such an endeavor is to come up with a method of interpretation. Barthes uses five codes to comment on the lexies. These codes cover the syntagmatic aspects of the text, in that they consider the ways the different parts are related to each other; they also cover the semantic aspects of the text, in that they take into consideration the ways the text is related to the outside world. The five codes, as paraphrased by Scholes (1974:154-155) are as follows:

" 1. The proairetic code, or code of actions: Under this code we can consider every action in a story from the opening of a door to an orgy of musicians.

Actions are syntagmatic. They begin at one point and end at another. In a story they interlock and overlap, but in the classic text they are all completed at the end.

2. The hermeneutic code, or code of puzzles. Like the code of actions, this is an aspect of narrative syntax. Whenever questions are raised (Who is that? What does this mean?) which the story will ultimately answer, we have an element of the hermeneutic code.

3. The cultural codes. Under this heading Barthes groups the whole system of knowledge and values invoked by a text. These appear as nuggets of proverbial wisdom, scientific 'truths,' the various stereotypes of understanding which constitute human 'reality.'

4. The connotative codes. These are the themes of the fiction. As they organize themselves around a particular proper name they constitute a 'character,' which is simply the same name accompanied by the same attributes.

5. The symbolic field. This is the field of 'theme' as we usually understand the word in Anglo-American formalists criticism: the idea or ideas around which a work is constructed. In 'Sarrasine' the symbolic field is based on the human body as a source of meaning, sex, and money. Thus a rhetorical figure like antithesis is one aspect of this code, and the concept of castration is another. The two are symbolically related."

Together,

...[t]he five codes create a kind of network, a *topos* through which



the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, becomes text). Thus, if we make no effort to structure each code, or the five codes among themselves, we do so deliberately, in order to assume the multivalence of the text, its partial reversibility. We are, in fact, concerned not to manifest a structure but to produce a structuration (Barthes, 1975:20).

Although Scholes (1974) criticizes this method for being "too arbitrary, too personal, and too idiosyncratic," he is also quick to point out that "it would be a mistake to reject this kind of approach out of hand simply because of Barthes's casualness and arbitrariness," for we need, he says, "a systematic approach to the analysis of fiction which cuts across the traditional divisions of narrative texts into plot, character, setting, and theme." Barthes's method, Scholes claims, helps us to avoid a trap that structuralism tends to plunge itself into: the tendency to bog a text down "at some ideal level of analysis and never coming to grips adequately with the materials of the actual texts" (p.155).

Compared to the other concepts discussed in 3.4.3, Barthes's "starring" method seems most difficult to apply to teaching. Such difficulty stems from three sources: first, concepts such as "lisible" and "scriptible" texts, "écrivain" and "écrivain," "plaisir" and "jouissance" are concepts very difficult for students to grasp; second, it is not easy to explain the five codes; and third, "starring" a text could be a long and tedious process. I believe, however, that despite these obstacles, introducing Barthes's method to students is valuable because of these reasons: 1) it offers students a sense of their own control over the reading process and a chance to be "textual workers"; 2) it enables them to experience something of the pleasure Barthes's terms "jouissance"; and 3) it helps to show students that, for some theorists, "meaning" is not something

that the author puts into the text and to be discovered by the reader; it is, rather, the product of a wider cultural and social dialectic (5). Moreover, as will be shown in 6.2.1 (Unit 4), the difficulty of applying the method to the study of a story by Maxine Hong Kingston ("The American Father," from *China Men*) is reduced by three means: by asking students to concentrate on a short extract from the story; by paraphrasing the five codes in language that students can understand; and by demonstrating to them how "starring" is done through a passage taken from Faulkner's "A Rose from Emily."

### 3.5. Application

Based on the theories discussed in 3.4.3 in this chapter, a number of exercises are designed with the aim of helping students to read literature. The exercises are applied to four stories by Maxine Hong Kingston, and are included in 6.2.1.

### 3.6. Summary

This chapter continued the effort to build a theoretical foundation on which the proposed curriculum is based. It began by discussing two models of reading, that of the Cognitivist and the Expressivist, as well as the differences between them. A parallel was then drawn between the cognitivist/ expressivist division in reading theory and the text-based/reader-based division in literary theory. Having argued that due to institutional constraints in HKU, the text-based approach to the reading of literature is more relevant to the Hong Kong context, it then went on to look briefly at modern literary theory, particularly those within the so-called "text-based" tradition, including "Formalism," "Structuralism," and "Post-structuralism." Following a general discussion of these "schools" of thought, the chapter then focused on some concepts related to Propp, three American New Critics (Brooks, Purser, and Warren), Todorov, and Barthes; these concepts were discussed in the light of the ways

they could be applied to the teaching of fiction, and in particular, to four short stories by Maxine Hong Kingston; these stories are discussed in greater details in Chapters 5 and 6.

### Endnotes to Chapter 3

1. My interest in Propp, Torodov, and Barthes was first stimulated when I came across Guy Dickens' M.A. thesis (1986). I have benefited enormously from reading it, and have also borrowed some ideas from his work when I wrote this section of this thesis.
2. A question that needs to be addressed here is: if I argue that students should be introduced to literary theory, and since these students are Chinese students, why would I not include the teaching of Chinese literary theory? My answer to this question is two-fold: first, since the purpose of my study is to teach students to read English, and not Chinese literature, it seems only natural that students be introduced to Western, as opposed to Chinese literary theory. Secondly, although Chinese literary scholarship has a long tradition of literary theory, much of it is studied in the light of classical Chinese literature, and not so much modern literature. In the University of Hong Kong, when modern Chinese literature is taught, students are also introduced to modern Western literary theory. Since the module I describe in this thesis uses Maxine Hong Kingston's stories, which were written in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, to introduce students to modern Western literary theory and encourage them to apply certain concepts in the theory to the reading of these stories seems logical and justified.
3. In this context, "criticism" refers to an attempt to interpret a particular work, whereas poetics (meaning structuralism) is concerned with an effort to look for systems and conventions that underlie all works.
4. I am aware of the difference between the kind of "genre" I refer to here and contemporary genre theories (such as those exemplified by researchers such as Swales and Martin). The latter type of "genre" studies is discussed in Chapter 4, which focuses on the approaches to the teaching of writing.

5. My decision to include Barthes's *S/Z* has been inspired by Guy Dickens' thesis (1986), and the three reasons for using the "starring" method in the literature classroom have been suggested by him.

# CHAPTER 4: APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF WRITING

## 4.1. Introduction

The curriculum that I propose in this thesis is aimed at teaching students to read and write about literature. I propose that the "English for Arts Students" (EAS) course in the University of Hong Kong (HKU) be divided into two parts: in the first semester, the course will focus on writing skills (teaching students to write academic essays that are acceptable in university); and this will prepare them for the second term, at the beginning of which they select one among six possible modules which is related to their own major. One of these modules is the "Reading and Writing about Literature" module. In diagrammatical form, the course design looks like this:

First Term	Academic Writing
Second Term	Discipline-specific Modules E.g., "Reading and Writing about Literature"

In Chapter 3, I have examined two reading models and some literary theories, and have argued that the "Cognitivist" model of reading, and certain theories from the text-based tradition, could be adopted to form the "reading" component of the module; this chapter turns to the "writing" aspect of proposed EAS course, as well as the "writing" component of the proposed module. This chapter will try to achieve two purposes: first, to discuss some approaches to writing instruction, in order to form a theoretical basis on which a syllabus to be used in the first semester will be built; and second, to look at several modes of instruction related to teaching students to write about

literature so as to lay a theoretical foundation on which the writing component in the "Reading and Writing about Literature" module will rest.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: the first part examines five major approaches to the teaching of writing in ESL instruction (1). Each of these approaches (except for the last one which will be treated in a slightly different way), will be discussed in term of its a) origins and principles; b) methods; and c) strengths and weaknesses, and the extent to which it could be applied to the the courses I try to construct later in thesis. Based on my discussion of these approaches, I will describe a pedagogical model of writing instruction that is appropriate for the first-year students in the Faculty of Arts in the HKU.

The second part of this chapter surveys a number of textbooks on writing about literature published in the last 20 years or so, and identifies the instructional modes that are used in them. Several of these methods will be selected and will be applied to the "Reading and Writing about Literature" module, the details of which is presented in 6.2.

## **4.2. Five approaches to the Teaching of Writing**

### **4.2.1. Focus on Form: Concern for Grammatical Form**

#### Origins and Principles

The type of writing exercise that dominates this approach to the teaching of writing is the so-called controlled or guided composition. Controlled or guided composition has its roots in the audio-lingual method (Lado, 1964; Chastain, 1976; Rivers, 1981), which is influenced by the structural linguists (Bloomfield, 1935; Saussure, 1916), and the behavioral psychologists (Skinner, 1957). Underlying this method is the notion that language is speech and that learning is habit formation. Writing, accordingly, only serves a secondary role--to reinforce oral patterns of language. Writing exercises,

therefore, take the form of sentence drills, fill-ins, substitutions, transformations, and compilations (Raimes, 1991).

### Methods

Controlled or guided compositions come in two forms, at the sentence level and at the paragraph level. Exercises at the sentence level ask students to re-write a given sentence pattern several times over, with different pre-selected vocabulary, for example,

The children stole the apples

Students/borrow/book

Woman/choose/cake

Porter/lift/suitcase

(Spencer 1965:125)

Spencer contends that there are three advantages to this kind of composition exercise: first, as shown in the above example, only nouns and verbs are required to be substituted, so that students do not have to deal with a complexity of grammatical features at the same time. Secondly, these exercises are easily constructed, and teachers could add or delete more grammatical features as they see appropriate. Thirdly, students are trained to produce accurate English sentences before they move on to writing paragraphs.

Exercises at the paragraph level can be divided into two types. The first type is designed for elementary-level students; it "uses carefully formed questions and visual stimuli to elicit a short piece of continuous prose" (Moody, 1965:148). The questions are sequenced in such a way that the answers to the questions will form a paragraph. An example is given below:

Mime or Flip Chart

Questions

Mother and boy buying a shirt

What did David's mother buy?



David putting on his shirt on Sunday	When did he wear his shirt?
David meeting Bola near the church	Where did he meet Bola?
Bola being rude to David	Bola was...to David (Written up because no obvious question is available)
David hitting Bola	What did David do to Bola?
Bola hitting David	What did Bola do to David?
David's shirt getting torn	When they were fighting, what happened?
David's mother being angry	His mother was...

#### Resulting paragraph

David's mother bought a new shirt. He wore his new shirt on Sunday. He met Bola near the church. Bola was rude to David. David hit Bola. Bola hit David. When they were fighting, David's shirt was torn. His mother was angry (Moody, 1965:148-149).

The second type is designed for more advanced students. It uses the substitution table to make certain alternatives mutually exclusive. The teacher explains to his students that choosing certain items at an early stage will affect choices they make as they go along. The construction of such an exercise follows these steps:

- a) a short list of grammatical items to be practiced is drawn up;
- b) a short paragraph embodying these items is written;
- c) plenty of alternatives are introduced into the original, to produce a table.

What follows is an example of this kind of exercise (Moody, 1965:151):

Two of our old students Mr Oladipo Mrs Ademola My uncle David's eldest brother		went to		England Lagos Nsukka Zaria Badagry	last year. last week. two days ago. three months ago.
He She They	went there	to inspect a new factory, to study at the university, to see Mr .....			
		to meet to visit	his their her	friend ....., sister-in-law,	
who which	works	in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. in the office of a big company.			
	teaches takes	students	from many different countries. of many nationalities.		
	makes produces	many kinds of		tyres. cloth. electrical equipment. batteries.	
He She They	travelled by	sea train air car lorry bus	because	she they he	did not have a car. could not afford an air ticket. could not go there by train. knew the ships were all full. wanted to get there quickly. did not want to pay too much money.
His Their Her	friends brother sister	met	them him her	at the	airport, docks, bus station, railway station, motor park, hotel,
The A An	manager bus taxi old friend				
and took	her them him	to	the his her their a	house. factory. hotel. office.	

Fig. 7. An Example of a Structured Writing Exercise

## Discussion

Advocates of controlled or guided compositions have pointed out that although exercises designed according to this instructional approach may appear to be mechanical, they are necessary. Pincas (1962), for example, argues that "these patterns are learned by imitation," and that "not until they have been learned can originality occur in the manipulation of patterns or in the choice of variables within the pattern" (p.186). These exercises can also

minimize errors on the part of the students, and can enable them to gain satisfaction and confidence in their ability to write correct English (Moody, 1965; Dykstra and Paulston, 1967).

Pincas, Moody, Dykstra and Paulston no doubt have in mind the teaching of writing to elementary-level students, and in that context, I think the statements they make are almost indisputable: since students have very limited knowledge of that language, they will need to rely on a great deal of input and to memorize sentence patterns; otherwise, they will fall back on their own language, and will make mistakes.

This approach does not, however, seem appropriate for our students as they already had 13 years of English instruction before they came to university, and are capable of writing extended prose. Nevertheless, there are common mistakes that Hong Kong Chinese make (2), and I think one of the best ways to deal with them is to have students do exercises that are designed according to the principles of controlled composition.

There are also objections to this kind of writing instruction. H.G. Widdowson (1978) points out that, while doing this kind of exercise, students "need pay no attention whatsoever to what the sentences mean or the manner in which they relate to each other" (p.116). Silva (1990) thinks that this type of method ignores the purpose of writing, and the audience who read it. In other words, students do not know why they are writing or for whom.

I do not think that these objections are necessarily justified. If the teacher in a particular teaching context designs exercises for his particular group of students, taking into consideration their background, interests, and needs, it is certainly possible to construct exercises that are meaningful and purposeful

(for the students in that context), and the students could certainly have an audience in mind for whom they write.

#### 4.2.2. Focus on Form: Concern for Rhetorical Form

##### Origins and principles

This kind of writing instruction is the product of a combination of at least two major paradigms: the basic principles of the current-traditional model derived from native-speaker composition instruction, and Kaplan's theory of contrastive rhetoric. The current-traditional paradigm has a number of overt characteristics. These features, as summarized by Young (1978), include: "the emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process; the analysis of discourse into words, sentences, and paragraphs; the classification of discourse into description, narration, exposition, and argument; the strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis); the preoccupation with the essay and the research paper" (Young, 1978:31).

The second paradigm--the contrastive rhetoric model--was first defined by Kaplan when he sought to discover whether organizational patterns of written material vary from culture to culture (1966). In an article he wrote in 1966, he explained that the "thought pattern" of English is "dominantly linear" in its development (1966:4), in contrast to the paragraph patterns of other languages and cultures, which he called Semitic, Oriental, Romance, and Russian. The differences between these languages are represented in the following diagram:

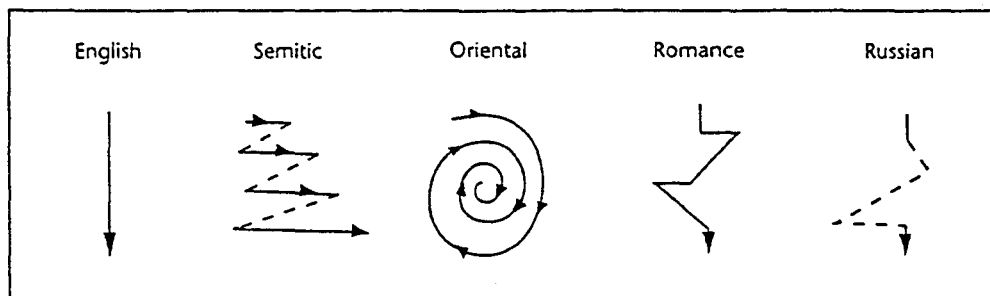


Fig. 8. Kaplan's Contrastive Rhetoric Paragraphs  
From: Reid, 1993:60

Kaplan's theory of contrastive rhetoric has been criticized in several ways. I will cite three major criticisms, with which I agree. First, some of Kaplan's arguments are simply wrong, due to his lack of understanding of other languages. Mohan and Au-Yueng Lo (1985), for example, point out that the mistake Kaplan makes when he claims that the Chinese paragraph is said to be indirect in its development, that it turns in a "widening gyre." The problem here is that Kaplan bases his claim on the "Eight-Legged Essay," the prescribed essay format for all scholars who sat the Civil Service Examination for some five centuries in China; but the Examination had been abolished since 1905! Furthermore, Mohan and Au-Yueng Lo cite examples from the sayings of Confucius and Mencius, as well as contemporary teachers of Chinese, to argue that writers writing for purposes other than answering questions in the Civil Service Examination do not write in this format. In fact, they recommend "direct, concise development" in the writing students do. Kraples (1990) is

right in saying that only those who are truly bilingual should engage in research in contrastive rhetoric.

The second kind of criticism comes from proponents of the "process" approach to the teaching of writing (see 4.2.3). They argue that contrastive rhetoric research examines the products (of writing) only, and ignores the "contrastive rhetorical context from which the L2 writers emerge and the processes these writers may have gone through to produce a text" (Leki, 1991a:123). Third, research in contrastive rhetoric has been accused of being ethnocentric and a manifestation of cultural imperialism (Kachru, 1976), since English is used as a "point of reference" (a "control" factor): "In English, we write like this; those who would write well in English must look at this pattern and imitate it" (Leki, 1991a:123). Fourth, Kaplan's five categories seem to reveal his ignorance of the differences between linguistic, cultural, and geographical differences.

Since the appearance of Kaplan's article, the notion of contrastive rhetoric has evolved into a field of study. Kaplan himself has modified his position somewhat: what he originally labeled as "cultural patterns" he now calls "preferential tendencies" (1982, 1983, 1988).

Since the early 1980s, research into contrastive rhetoric has continued to show that each culture organizes and presents written materials in a different way, (e.g., Connor, 1983; Connor and Kaplan, 1987; Fagan and Cheong, 1987; Carlson, 1988; Connor and Johns, 1990; Anderson, 1991); and national or cultural differences are not dependent on language but on the rhetorical traditions of society (Purves, 1996); in other words, the way one writes is not determined by the nature and structure of one's native language, but the way one's culture chooses to express itself.

Although contrastive rhetoric has been frequently mentioned in discussions of theory and research, "its application to classroom instruction has not developed correspondingly" (Leki, 1991a:417). Kaplan himself admits that the intention of contrastive rhetoric research is not so much to "provide pedagogical method," (Grabe and Kaplan, 1989:271), but to show how written products reflect the link between culture and writing. Contrastive rhetoric, however, is useful in consciousness raising: it helps ESL students to become aware of the differences between the kinds of writing they do in their language and that they do in English. It also helps them to become aware of the differences between audience expectations (Leki, 1991a).

### Methods

The main concern of this kind of approach is the construction and arrangement of sentences and paragraphs into a coherent form. The most important unit here is the paragraph. Attention is paid to 1) individual elements within the paragraph (topic sentences, support sentences, concluding sentences, and transitions); 2) the overall theme of a paragraph (e.g., illustration, exemplification, comparison, contrast, classification, causal analysis); and 3) separate functions of different paragraphs within a larger piece of discourse (e.g., narration, description, exposition, and argumentation).

Paragraphs are then organized into an essay. One very popular exercise found in many ESL writing textbooks that use this approach is the so-called "five-paragraph theme." The students' essays, no matter what pattern is in use, are generally completed in one introductory paragraph, three main paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph (Seale, 1978; Raimes, 1983a; Wallace, 1985; Fazio et al, 1990).

I believe that this kind of writing instruction is useful, in that it provides student-writers with clear guidelines on how to produce a tightly structured paragraph as well as an organized and coherent essay. I also believe that it is particularly useful for our students in HKU. Although by the time they enter the University, they are capable of writing short essays in English (of about 600-1000 words in length, a requirement in the Advanced Level English Examination, see 1.2.3), they need to be introduced to the academic essay. Understanding the structure of the academic essay and the conventions associated with it will help our student to summarize, paraphrase, and critique the readings they have done for their assignments, as well as present their arguments in a way (in a paper) which is acceptable to their lecturers and tutors. Moreover, as our students already have had more than 10 years of English instruction before they come to university, they often question the necessity of having to take another year of English. Teaching them how to write academic essays will not only enable them to perform effectively in their other subjects, and will also help them to see the relevance of the EAS course to their studies in the University.

There are also those who are opposed to this approach. These opponents contend that this kind of instruction does not pay enough attention to audience (for whom the students are writing) and the writing process (Silva, 1990; Raimes, 1991). I do not see why this has to be so. First, regarding readership: although it is possible to argue that students cannot choose their own audience, it is unjustified to say that an audience does not exist. The teacher is always there, the ultimate audience. As the students write, they have in mind what the teacher expects. Some may complain that this is too restrictive, that it stifles students' creativity; yet, the fact that the teacher is often the sole reader, the judge, evaluator, and determiner of the quality of the



students' writing is, within the university context, a reality that cannot be denied. Second, regarding the writing process: it is completely possible to write according to a certain form and to treat the writing exercise as a process. The two--writing in conformity to a certain structure, and writing in a process-- are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Another criticism of this approach is that it stifles creativity and discourages self-discovery. Sommers (1982) argues:

How very important is the relation between discovering a structure and discovering a meaning. We tell our students: Be correct! Be concise! But above all: Discover! Yet we rob our students of this important part of the discovery process, the discovery of structure, by forcing them to write formulaic five paragraph essays. We impose rigid structures upon students at the risk of turning out terribly mechanical writing. A fixed structure often inhibits the discovery of ideas and therefore, the process of significant revision (quoted in Wallace, 1985:8).

Whether this argument could be considered valid or not depends on the nature of the piece of writing the student has to produce. Discovery of form and meaning is important if the student is engaged in creative writing, in producing, for example, a story, a play, a poem. But if the required product is a piece of academic writing, which demands conformity to a certain structural format and observation of certain conventions (such as the inclusion of an introduction, separate sections on literature review, analysis of data, discussion of results, and a conclusion; as well as the use of citations, footnotes, and a bibliography), then individual creativity, which presumably implies deviation from this pattern, will simply mean that the student-writer has

not met the requirements of the assignment, and therefore (perhaps) will not pass the course. Furthermore, to argue that "a fixed structure inhibits...the process of significant revision" is illogical: the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. Of course it is possible to write according to a certain structure and, at the same time, to revise--as many times as one likes--the writing one has done. As will be shown in 4.3, I rely heavily on the current-traditional model to construct the syllabus for the first term in the EAS course.

#### **4.2.3. Focus on the Writer**

##### Origins and principles

Developments in the process approach to the teaching of writing in ESL instruction have been influenced by L1 research. Within L1 research, there are two major camps: the Expressivists and the Cognitivists (Reid, 1993). The first camp, the Expressivists, base their theory on the philosophy of Expressionism, which advocates the expression of honest and personal thought. Teachers who adopt this approach to the teaching of writing tend to be non-directive. They believe that their task is to create a secure and supportive environment in which students can express their feelings and ideas. The goal is to develop self-discovery, fluency, and power over one's writing act (Elbow, 1973, 1981). Students, in turn, are encouraged to view writing as "an art, a creative act in which the process, the discovery of true self--is as important as the product--the self discovered and expressed" (Berlin, 1988:484). (An obvious link can be seen between this kind of writing instruction and the expressivist model of reading instruction discussed in 3.3.2).

The second camp, the Cognitivists, emphasize two notions: thinking and process. The first key idea links higher-order thinking skills to problem-solving abilities. This is the theme of Flower's textbook *Problem*

*Solving Strategies for Writing* (1985). Flower advocates a technique which requires students to plan extensively. Planning, as explained by Johns (1990), includes "defining the rhetorical problem, placing it in the larger context, making it operational, exploring its parts, generating alternative solutions, and arriving at a well-supported conclusion" (p.26). Once the student has identified the problem and has planned the paper, he then continues the writing process (the second major idea in the Cognitivist camp) by putting his ideas into words through the stages of drafting, writing, revising, and editing.

Much of the research in process-oriented writing in ESL instruction echoes the concepts in L1 research; these include:

1) The importance of self-discovery in the act of writing: Zamel (1983) argues that the composing process should be seen as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (p.165). In contrast to controlled composition, or the current-rhetoric approach to the teaching of writing, it is content and one's desire to express his ideas that determine form and not the other way around. In short, composing means expressing ideas and conveying meaning. Composing means thinking (Raimes, 1983b:261).

2) The importance of emphasizing writing as a process: Writing processes, advocates of this approach explain, are not linear or formulaic; rather, they are individual and recursive. Advocates of this approach argue that teachers "must try to provide [their students] with ample time to write and re-write, to learn that several drafts may be needed before intention and expression become one" (Zamel, 1982:205).

3) The importance of collaborative writing and peer evaluation: In commenting on the use of individual conferences (with teachers), Zamel (1982) points out

that although the effectiveness of this technique cannot be denied, it has one major drawback: it denies students the opportunity to share their writing with other students, an activity, she says, "that forms the basis of much process centered instruction" (p.206). Encouraging students to share their writing with others would enable them to see their work from others' perspectives; furthermore, the support and feedback they get from their peers, she argues, can be very valuable.

### Methods

Techniques that have grown out of these two camps include process writing, collaborative learning and writing, and using working journals. These techniques, as well as their merits and problems, will be discussed below.

#### 1) Process writing:

Researchers and teachers who advocate "process writing" encourage students to view writing as a process, which includes a number of stages which have been called, in general terms, pre-writing, writing, and re-writing; or alternatively, and more specifically, brainstorming, clustering, outlining, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading. Other stages could include branching, workshopping, mind-mapping, scaffolding. A great number of textbooks written for first-year university students from the late 1970s onwards (through the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s) incorporate this approach. Examples abound: Koch and Brazil (1978), Podis and Podis (1984), Reid (1988), Leki (1989), Clanchy and Ballard (1990), Booth and Gregory (1991), Fitzgerald (1992), Gillespie, Becker, and Singleton (1993), Fulwiler (1995).

The "process" approach to writing has several advantages: First, because writing is seen as a process and includes different stages, the writer is not burdened with trying to produce a complete piece of writing within one sitting; he is able to focus on one aspect at a time. Second, because the writer knows

that he will return to what he has written at a later stage, and will have the opportunity to correct errors or make revisions, he can write a first draft without feeling the pressure to produce something perfect. Third, because a certain amount of time has lapsed between the first draft and the next one, the writer is able to look back at his writing with certain objectivity, which presumably will enable him to identify mistakes (he would otherwise not have seen) and make necessary changes.

The "process" approach to writing is particularly suitable when students are writing research or term papers, which usually involve library research, reading of various kinds of materials, or collection of data. But in order to benefit from this method, students need to be able to plan ahead and to be disciplined.

The "process" approach, however, is not suitable for other writing tasks, for example, answering questions in tests and examinations. It is simply not realistic to ask students to write multiple drafts within the constraints of an examination session. Writing essays in an examination requires very different techniques--for example, the ability to interpret questions, to quickly decide on a stance towards an issue, to plan the structure of the answer, to select evidence to support the argument, and to write speedily yet eligibly, all to be done within an hour or two. These are techniques that the "process" writing approach does not teach. In fact, a student who is used to writing in a process may find it difficult to function quickly and spontaneously enough to cope with examinations. Within HKU, for example, most subjects require students to take an examination at the end of the academic year. Therefore, while it is necessary to train students to be disciplined "process" writers when they write term essays and reports, it is equally important to prepare them for examinations.

Besides not being able to prepare students for examinations, four other problems with "process" writing need to be mentioned. First, while proponents of this approach accuse those who advocate the "current-traditional rhetoric" model (see 4.2.2) for being too rigid, for not allowing students enough room to create and to imagine, they too, insist so much on the virtue on the process that they fail to take into account the differences between individuals: not everyone likes to, or writes best in stages. Reid (1984), for example, describes two kinds of writers, the "radical outliner" and the "radical brainstormer." The former finds brainstorming to be difficult, time-consuming, and unnecessary, he can go right into an outline. The latter, on the other hand, tells the teacher: " When you asked for an outline, I could only make it after I have finished the paper." To ask all students to go through the stages in the "writing process" seems unreasonable.

Second, advocates of the "process" approach claim that good writing is "involved" writing, and that students write best when they are interested in and care about what they write (e.g., Raimes, 1983). Although this assumption could very well be correct, it is not realistic. Horowitz (1986a) uses evidence he gained from his previous teaching experience and points out that "many academic writing assignments [he] examined in a [mid-western] university in the U.S. left students no choice but to write in a 'top-down' way because they require students to follow a tightly-structured question-by-question, point-by-point outline" (p. 142). He concludes by saying that "students rarely have a free choice of topics in their university writing assignments" (Horowitz, 1986a:143).

This is also true in the HKU context. Many of the writing assignments students have to do have fixed formats, such as laboratory reports, social science

research papers, business correspondences (memos, job application letters, resumes, complaint letters, letters of adjustment, etc.). Even in humanities courses such as literature, history, or philosophy, students are often provided with specific questions, or at least a range of possible topics to choose from; rarely are they given the freedom to choose whatever "they are interested or care about."

Thirdly, the process-oriented approach to teaching writing gives students an erroneous or unrealistic understanding of their real abilities. Proponents of the approach adopt a "humanistic" view of teaching and emphasize the importance of responding to students as individuals and not only to their writing. But then in "real" situations such as examination settings, examiners respond only to the writing and not take into account the process the students have gone through or the effort they have made.

To sum up, concepts such as "multiple drafts," "get it down to the page and then organize it," "choose topics of personal interest" and "gentle evaluation"--techniques that the "process" approach advocates--are creditable techniques, and could be applied, to a certain extent, to the HKU context. These techniques could be applied, for example, to the first term in the EAS course where the teacher has 12 weeks to take students through two to three cycles of writing processes, where there is time for students to produce several drafts of their work before turning in the final version, where teachers have the commitment and patience to correct the drafts and give students feedback at different stages. These techniques will also cultivate in students good writing habits that will benefit them in the long run. In the short term, students will also be able to transfer these skills to the writing of research papers in the courses they take in the Arts Faculty. Nevertheless, as has been mentioned above, students will also need to write papers that conform to certain

structural formats and to meet academic demands such as examinations.

## 2) Collaborative learning and writing:

Collaborative learning acts on the assumptions that "reading and writing are no solitary, individual activities, but social and collaborative ones" (Bruffee, 1993:1). Bruffee, in his book *A Short Guide in Writing: Composition, Collaborative Learning, and Constructive Reading*, introduces several kinds of activities that are based on this pedagogical assumption.

Bruffee's textbook takes students through the writing process, but the work to be done at each stage is not carried out individually, but together, in small groups. Thus, through what he calls "inventing" (brainstorming for ideas), producing a "descriptive outline" (coming up with a detailed outline that describes what the essay is about and how it is organized), "topic interviewing" (talking to one another in order to develop an idea), writing a "position paper" (producing an essay that contains a proposition and substantiating it with examples and evidence), to "peer conferencing and reviewing" (checking and critiquing one another's paper), students work together and help each other to accomplish each task along the way.

The instruction that Bruffee gives under "invention" is indicative of this kind of approach:

Work in a group of five to seven people. Have one person record views expressed in the group and the consensus that the group arrives at collaboratively. Try to arrive at answers that most people in the group can live with. Make sure the recorder makes notes of differences of opinion. Finally, review the recorder's notes. They should accurately state what the group has decided,



and include differences and dissent. When you have finished the task, the recorder will report the results of the group's discussion to the rest of the class (pp.20-21).

Although the collaborative efforts take different forms in the other stages in the writing process, the same spirit of togetherness pervades.

Collaborative learning and writing has the advantage of providing students with mutual support. In EAS groups where there are only 12-15 students, it is not difficult to encourage students to do collaborative work, and it is also easy for the teacher to supervise the small groups and to monitor their progress.

Besides, what has been learned in collaborative work (the process of cooperating, dividing up work, coordinating, solving conflicts, respecting one another's views and style etc.) could be applied to project work students often have to engage in their other classes.

But collaborative learning and writing also has its danger and limitations. First, similar to the problems related to "process" writing, collaboration is only possible to a very limited extent in a "real" academic context, where students are often asked to produce work individually; it is, to say the obvious, impossible to collaborate in examinations. Second, collaborative learning assumes that all the members within a group will contribute equally and will make an equal amount of effort to participate. But this may not be the case in real life situations, where certain members do much of the work and others do a minimum share of it; yet they all receive the same grade. Besides being unfair to those who have worked harder than others, it also provides a convenient way for the less industrious to pass a course without having really learned anything. Third, there are bound to be "loners" in all classes, those who prefer to work alone, and who believe that they learn more and faster if

they undertake a project or write a paper on their own. Unless "participation" is part of students' final grade (which is rare in HKU), then they should not be penalized for preferring to do an assignment individually.

### 3) Working Journals:

The belief that underlies the idea of keeping working journals is that writing leads to learning. Anson and Wilcox (1992) explain this concept in simple yet clear terms:

...experienced writers know that an immense amount of thinking, learning, and discovery occur during the writing itself. A vague idea leads to some early, sketchy writing. In turn, these preliminary words produce richer and clearer ideas.

These ideas provoke more and better writing. And so on.

Writing leads to thinking, and thinking leads to more and better writing. Ideas lead to words, words lead to ideas, and both expand and deepen and grow richer. It's a process that feeds on and fuels itself, and one that experienced writers learn to trust (pp.7-8).

As for the kinds of journals that are kept, Fulwiler (1991) has identified a spectrum, ranging from personal diaries, which are "private accounts of a writer's thoughts and feelings" and which may include more writing about emotion than intellect, to class notebooks which are "usually meant to be impersonal," they contain mainly the recording of information and other people's ideas. He provides a diagram which represents this spectrum:

DIARY-----JOURNAL-----CLASS NOTEBOOK

[I-centered]                      [I/subject]                      [Subject-centered]

(p.45).

His suggestion to students is that they combine the personal voice and stance in the diary and the focus on a subject matter in the class notebook. Thus, when a student reacts (in writing) to a certain topic he has read about in a textbook or has listened to in a lecture, he is keeping what Fulwiler calls an academic journal.

Anson and Wilcox (1992) further divide the academic journal into three types:

a) The repository of short assignments: this is a portfolio of "short, sometimes informal, writing assignments or focus papers" (p.24). The papers are either assigned by the teacher (and therefore has specific requirements on content, structure, format, etc.) or "self-sponsored" (which means that students are encouraged to write in a more personal and informal way in order to explore a subject in depth and to clarify a concept).

b) The dialogue journal: as the name itself implies, writing this kind of journal requires that a student carry on a conversation with another student. Both students write about a lecture or a piece of reading, and then they exchange their journals, respond to, and comment on each other's entries.

c) The double-entry notebook: in keeping this kind of journal, students are asked to divide the pages of their notebooks into two columns: on one side of the page (say, the left), the writer "jots down an idea, an excerpt from a reading, a quotation, a bit of a lecture, or a factual description" (p.30); then, on the other side, (the right, presumably), he comments on or explores what he has written on the left.

Spack and Sadow (1983) go further to suggest that such dialogues do not have to be limited to students. Teachers too, can, and should participate in

the exercise. In their article, entitled "Student-teacher Working Journals in ESL Freshman Composition," they recorded how they and their students collaborated in producing journals in their classes, to the great satisfaction of both parties.

Keeping working journals encourage students to write as much as possible, perhaps even on a daily basis. I think this is beneficial to our students who use English as a second (and increasingly a foreign) language context, by obliging them to use English frequently. Among the three kinds of journals that Fulwiler proposes, the first and third types seem very plausible within the HKU context: weekly short assignments, on top of longer term essays, will give students constant practice in writing. The second type appears to be very interesting but could be difficult to assign for it requires a great amount of discipline and commitment on the part of the students, and perhaps a great deal of coordination and "chasing after" on the part of the teacher. Spack and Sadow's suggestion, appealing and useful as it sounds, would be even more difficult to carry out in HKU because of the language teachers' heavy workload and the number of students they have to teach. The activity, however, is practicable in an intensive course where the teacher teaches only a group of students for a limited period of time. In HKU, this could be tried out in a summer intensive course that usually last two to four weeks.

#### **4.2.4. Focus on the Reader**

##### Origins and principles

Instructional theories which focus on the reader consider writing as a social act that takes place within a specific context. In this connection, whatever is written is produced for a specific audience (Coe, 1987). Many of these theories can be found in so-called social constructionist literature. For the proponents of the social constructionist views, the language and form of a text

are determined by the community within which, and for which it is written.

This school of thought seems to have been inspired by, among other sources, Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970) (3). Kuhn argues that knowledge is "intrinsically the common property of a group or else nothing" (p.201). His social constructionist views have left an indelible mark on philosophy. Rorty, for one, has been influenced by Kuhn. In his *Philosophy of the Mirror of Nature* (1979), he says that all knowledge is a social construct. A social constructionist position, then, assumes that in any discipline, "entities that are normally called reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on are constructs generated by communities of like-minded peers" (Bruffee, 1986:774).

These "like-minded" peers form a "discourse community" which has its own rules and regulations. Swales (1990:24-27) has provided a six-point definition of such a community, and I quote directly,

- 1) A discourse community has a broadly agreed upon set of common public goals;
- 2) A discourse community has mechanisms for intercommunication among its members;
- 3) A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback;
- 4) A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims;
- 5) A discourse community has some specific vocabulary;
- 6) A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discorsal expertise.

I subscribe to this view of Social Constructionism to a certain degree, and

believe that a university, for example, is such a community, and each of the faculties and departments within the universities is a smaller discourse community within this larger one. Its members are professors, lecturers, tutors who "speak" a certain "language," and are "experts readers" who are "all-powerful" and guard the doors to the community (Johns, 1990). New entrants must learn the "language" if they are to be initiated into this community.

The task that these new entrants face, in Currie's (1993) words, "is a complex and demanding one" (p.101). It includes: learning the cultural rules and meeting the cognitive demands that the institution imposes (Bizzell, 1982b, 1986); becoming pragmatically competent (Perelman, 1986); developing "the requisite skills, abilities, and knowledge necessary for participation in a given community" (Mehan, 1980:130); and, because there are differences between disciplinary communities, students must develop competence in each of the disciplinary cultures they might come across in the course of their studies (Bartholomae, 1985).

In other words, these new entrants/students have to become familiar with different genres so that they can function in these discourse communities. Bhatia (1993) elaborates on Swales (1990) definition of "genre" and identifies four major features:

First, genre is "a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs"; second, "it is often a highly structured and conventionalized communicative event"; third, various genres display "constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form, and functional value"; and fourth, "these

contributions are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purposes" (pp. 13-15).

### Methods

As to how to gain access to such academic communities, there are mainly two kinds of suggestions, put forward by two groups of teachers/researchers. The first is the so-called "general academic" group, who believes that there is a general set of tasks and a basic academic language that "teachers should present to students" (Johns, 1990:29). They also believe that after the students have been familiarized with "the common core of academic language and conventions" (Johns, 1990:29), they will be able to transfer them to the kind of work they have to do in their academic studies.

Spack (1988), one of the most vocal advocates of this approach, argues that "general" skills, rather than "specific" skills (those related to the students' own disciplines) should be taught. She puts forward five reasons: First, it is difficult, she says, to design a course (e.g., a writing course) that has "a carefully planned pedagogical or rhetorical rationale" when "it is dependent on a content course" (p.37). Both language teachers and students, she argues, find themselves in rather awkward situations: the teachers may feel uncomfortable and insecure when they find that they do not have a firm grasp of the subject matter; the students, in turn, may feel disconcerted when they find that their teachers cannot fully explain issues related to the subject matter.

A second problem, Spack contends, has to do with assessment. Because language teachers are not familiar with certain subjects, it is possible that they may be "fooled," for example, by a highly fluent and accurate piece of writing and awards it with a high mark, without realizing that the student-writer

has in fact not demonstrated adequate understanding of the discipline.

Third, it seems, Spack suggests, that one way to solve the second problem is for the language teachers to master other subjects, but this is not realistic:

Besides the fact that the content is different, "each discipline [also] offers a different angle for looking at subject matter, a different kind of thinking" (p.38).

A fourth and related difficulty discussed by Spack concerns the different writing conventions in each discipline: each discipline has its own conventions; and these conventions are not static, for they may change over time.

Language teachers do not have enough time to keep up with all these changes.

Lastly, Spack argues that even though it is possible for language teachers to study the products of other subjects (and therefore find out how writing is done in the different disciplines), this does not mean that they understand the process through which the products are produced.

Based on the above arguments, Spack (1988) concludes that "the best we can accomplish is to create programs in which students learn general strategies, rhetorical principles, and tasks that can transfer to other course work" (p.41).

These strategies and tasks include: working with data, either as observers or participants; writing from other texts, including techniques such as summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, synthesizing materials from a number of sources in order to establish a perspective on a given subject or controversy; carrying out the writing tasks in the context of a process-oriented approach, where students go through the stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

Besides the "general" skills suggested by Spack, a number of researchers (e.g., Kroll, 1979; Ostler, 1980; Johns, 1981, 1988; Bridgeman and Carlson, 1984; Horowitz, 1986b; McKenna, 1987; Currie, 1993; Leki and Carson, 1994) have also put forward similar views: they discuss "general" tasks that students



should be able to perform in university. Their suggestions are based on surveys that were carried out in different university settings. Horowitz (1986b), for example, summarizes these tasks into seven categories: 1) summary of reactions to a reading; 2) annotated bibliography; 3) report on a specified participatory experience; 4) connection between theory and data; 5) case study; 6) synthesis of multiple sources; and 7) research projects.

I agree with the "generalists" arguments only to a certain extent. I think there are several problems with their position. First, the so-called "general" strategies that Spack, Horowitz, and others list cannot truly be "general" for they are by nature discipline-specific. Take "working with data" as an example: the way a chemist collects, analyzes, presents, and discusses data is different from the way a biologist does it, not to say a sociologist or a psychologist. Or consider the technique of "writing from other sources": the kinds of data a social scientist uses (e.g., results of a questionnaire survey) and those that an art historian deals with (e.g., paintings of a certain century) are inherently dissimilar, and therefore require different techniques in analyzing and writing about them. It is almost impossible, even irresponsible, to instruct students to "work with data" and "write from other texts" in a "general" way without taking into account the nature of the discipline about which they write.

Furthermore, the structure and format of each kind of writing, as well as the kind of language used, the levels of objectivity, formality, and assertiveness, to be adopted in writing also vary from discipline to discipline. Compare, for example, a physics laboratory report and a reaction paper to a poem, written for a literature class. Besides the fact that the structure of the two pieces of writing are different, the style and language required to produce them is dissimilar as well--the former probably requires a highly objective tone (by using perhaps the passive voice), whereas the latter allows for a much higher

degree of subjectivity (by using, for example, the active voice).

The second area in which I disagree with the "generalists" is: I believe that it is possible to construct meaningful writing courses that are closely tied to content courses, and it is possible to establish a system of co-assessment in which subject and language teachers work together to evaluate students' writing. This is seen in the success that has been attained by content-based courses (see 2.2.3) and the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Movement (see 4.2.6). In terms of teaching students to write about literature, the range of textbooks that have been produced in the last 20 years or so also testifies to the fact that it is possible to produce teaching materials that are discipline-specific. The module that I present in this thesis (described in Chapter 6) is an example of such a content-based course.

It is, however, also important to point out that language teachers--speaking in very general terms--tend to be more familiar with certain disciplines (e.g. linguistics, literature, and the social sciences) than others (for example, the physical and natural sciences). The extent they need to rely on the expertise of subject teachers depend on which disciplines they are dealing with.

In the English Centre of HKU, for example, most of the teachers have first degrees in linguistics, English, the modern languages, psychology and education; as well as higher degrees and professional training in applied linguistics and education. They can therefore rely on their own background and training when designing courses for the Arts and Social Sciences students, but will need a great deal more advice and input from their colleagues from the Science, Engineering, Medical, Architecture faculties when they write materials for their students.

Unlike the "generalists," a second group of language specialists maintain that understanding general tasks is not enough, as each discourse community has its own conventions. Johns (1990) cites these examples: Swales (1984) points out a number of characteristics in scientific introductions; Huckin (1987) has identified features in scientific articles; Connor and Johns (1989) found that business people and engineers adopt different approaches to argumentation. Others, more recent studies in the 1990s, include Love's (1991) examination of the discourse features in geology textbooks; Salager-Meyer's (1992) move analysis study of verb tense and modality distribution in medical English abstracts; and Brett's (1994) study of the results section of sociology articles.

In theory, I agree with the second group of language specialists, and believe that students should be taught to follow, as specifically as possible, the conventions of specific academic disciplines. Nevertheless, in practice, I must admit that despite my criticism of the position of the "generalists," and my belief that students should learn to write within academic disciplines, I do realize that there are practical difficulties in real-life language teaching situations, especially in situations where English for Academic Purposes courses are taught. Two of these difficulties are: first, Spack and other advocates of the "general" approach is right in saying that it is not realistic for language teachers to try to master other disciplines besides their own, and that it is dangerous to pretend to understand another discipline by merely studying the written work produced by their experts. (One way to resolve this problem is for language teachers to work closely with subject teachers.)

A second practical difficulty is: it is unlikely that new university students who are not following professional courses (such as medicine, law, architecture) to focus on one subject area right away. In HKU, for example, students in the

Arts Faculty do not have to decide on a major (or majors) until their second year. During their first year of studies, they are required to take three to four courses (depending on whether the courses are full or half courses) from a range of possibilities, from both the Arts and Social Sciences Faculties. A student, for example, who intends to become an English major may choose to elect courses in literature, linguistics, sociology and psychology. In teaching them academic writing skills then, it is not enough to teach them to write about literature; it is also necessary to provide them with a set of "general" skills that they could apply to other disciplines as well. This explains the two-part structure in the new EAS course that I am proposing: in the first term, students take a course in "academic writing"; and in the second term, they focus on one discipline, probably the discipline they plan to concentrate on in their second and third years. Despite my disagreement with the "generalists" then, I cannot escape the need to propose a "general writing skills" course, because all kinds of limitations--in terms of time, finance, and manpower--do not allow us to offer a great range of discipline-specific modules, and do not allow us to require students to take three to four of them within an academic year. Such, I suppose, is a gap between theory and practice that cannot be fully bridged.

#### **4.2.5. Focus on Content**

As the historical development and underlying concepts of content-based language instruction have already been discussed in Chapter 2 (see 2.2.3), in this section, I will only concentrate on the methods used in content-based writing classes.

In her 1986 article on content-based instruction, Shih (1986) identifies four distinct features in this kind of approach. First, "personal experience and observation is de-emphasized" (p.624); instead, students are asked to integrate different sources (from readings, lectures, discussion, etc.) of

information they are studying, and also to provide an interpretation of this synthesized information. Writing is related to other disciplines and is seen as a "means to stimulate students to think and learn" (p.624). Secondly, the focus is on what is said more than how it is said. The writing instructor, therefore, must know the subject well, as content dictates form and not vice-versa. Thirdly, in contrast to other more "traditional" approaches that focus on the skills of writing, this method combines the skills of listening, reading, and discussing with writing, with the first three leading to the fourth.

Fourthly, again, as opposed to the "traditional" methods, content-based instruction allows a longer "incubation" period (time given to students to read, study, and discuss) a topic before asking them to set pen to paper.

Moreover, students are encouraged to read widely and extensively in order to assimilate information. Unlike other methods where students "rely solely or primarily on self-generated ideas or write on a new topic for each new composition," students base their writing on external sources and can build assignments on one another with "situational sequencing" (Schuster, 1984).

Based on these principles, Shih (1986) goes on to discuss five kinds of content-based academic writing instruction:

- 1) Topic-centered "modules" or "mini-courses" (attention is given to all four language skills; most commonly used with students in the upper level or pre-academic, intensive ESL programs).
- 2) Content-based academic writing courses (reading and writing skills are emphasized, suitable for newly enrolled undergraduates to prepare them to handle tasks across disciplines).
- 3) Content-centered English for specific purposes (ESP) courses, suitable for any level as long as students in the same class/group share the same

interests or needs.

- 4) Composition or multi-skill English for academic purposes (EAP) courses/tutorials as adjuncts to university content-courses, appropriate for upper-intermediate to advanced students.
- 5) Individualized help, provided for students who are enrolled in subject-related courses. The focus is on writing.

The module that I am proposing is based on the second method. This has been discussed in 2.2.3.

Closely associated with content-based instruction is an educational development called "Writing Across the Curriculum Movement" that has had profound influence on the teaching of writing in the United States. I shall now consider this movement in some detail because it seems to me that there is much that we (in Hong Kong) can learn from this educational endeavor. Precipitated by a number of social changes in the American society in the 1960s, the movement came into being in the 1970s. The situation in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States are similar to that in Hong Kong in the late 1980s and 1990s in several ways: the public universities were/are no longer dominated by the "elite" (see 1.3.2); there was/is a sudden increase in the population on university campuses (see 1.3.2); admission requirements were/are lowered, so were/are academic standards (including writing abilities) of those who were/are admitted into universities (see 1.3.2, 1.3.3). Like the United States two decades ago, the universities in Hong Kong need also to pay more attention to the teaching of writing as an academic skill. Many of the models that have emerged in the "Writing Across the Curriculum" Movement will serve as useful references when we try to come up with a curricular paradigm which is suitable for the situation in Hong Kong.

#### 4.2.6. The "Writing Across the Curriculum" Movement

##### Historical Sketch

Russell (1991) points out that "cross-cultural writing programs were almost always a response to the perceived need for greater access, greater equity," that "they set out to assimilate, integrate, or ... initiate previously excluded students by means of language instruction." "So, he concludes, "it is not surprising that the greatest efforts came as the pressure for access increased" (p.271).

He goes on to cite examples from history (in the U.S.) to support this assertion; and I will refer to two of them here. In the post-war era, when a large number of GIs returned from war and entered higher education, there were two responses to this phenomenon: the communications movement and reforms in general education. In the early 1970s, in response to open-admissions policies in many public universities, as well as racial integration policies in the secondary schools, educators were forced to rethink language education, and it was during this time that the WAC Movement came into being.

Several factors contributed to the birth of the movement (Berlin, 1990). First and foremost is an ideological factor: the political and cultural upheaval in the 1960s revived the communitarian vision in America, a social and educational thought that had spurred previous generations of curricular reformers. The second factor concerns the influence of theorists such as Peter Elbow(1973, 1981), Ken Macrorie (1970), Donald Graves (1975), and James Moffet (1968). They profoundly influenced the generation of teachers and curricular reformers who were nurtured during that decade. Their theories contribute to some of the major features that are to characterize the WAC Movement. For example, the idea of the classroom as a community,

student-centered pedagogy, encouraging students to express themselves in writing, and so on.

Third, besides internal influence, there was also influence that came from outside the United States. The Dartmouth Conference held in 1966 was an important landmark in the history of the writing instruction in the U.S. In that conference, leaders of the National Council of English (NCTE) met with their counterparts from England, leaders of Britain's National Association of Teachers of English (NATE). The Americans, who had been pursuing rigid disciplinary or industrial models, were challenged by the British, who were increasingly emphasizing the linguistic, social, and personal development of the student--what Dixon (1966) describes as "a personal growth model, based on principles of language in operation and creative expression" (quoted in Russell, 1991:272). Classroom practices that grew out of this model include loosely structured classroom "talk," dramatic improvisation, and personal response to literature; these took precedence over disciplinary knowledge acquired through the study of literary classics and rhetorical or grammatical principles. The writing of students was taken seriously, and was considered to be worthy of analysis. One British educator, James Britton, also a participant in the Dartmouth Seminar, was to provide an influential theoretical framework to link the development of writing in the disciplines with personal writing.

The movement grew rapidly and this could be accounted for in a number of ways (Russell, 1991). First was the emergence of the professional writing instructor. During the 1960s, interest in writing instruction was evident in the communications movement, which led to a renewed interest in rhetoric. This "revival of rhetoric" resulted in two important consequences: it gave writing teachers an identity quite distinct from that of the literature teacher; second, it led to the setting up of professional organizations such as the Conference on



College Composition and Communication (CCCC), a large professional organization for writing teachers, which went far beyond research on freshmen composition to exploration of issues to writing and learning.

A second reason has to do with racial integration. Due largely to the civil rights movement and the race riots of the 1960s, the nation began to take affirmative actions against educational inequality. These actions had important implications for language teaching: many schools, for the first time, had to face the task of teaching "mainstream" English to students who did not grow up within the "mainstream" American culture.

A third reason concerns the rapid growth of education. A number of institutions of higher learning emerged during the decade of the 1970s: in the 1960s, there were 2,006 colleges (and universities); by 1980, there were 3,125 institutions, many of which operated on an open admission system. Due to integration policies, many colleges had to face the task of educating students who came from very different language backgrounds. City University of New York (CUNY) was a case in point. Social and political upheavals in the late 1960s forced the university to begin open admissions in 1970, five years earlier than planned. In response to the needs of students who were ill-prepared for university, Mina Shaughnessy, who was to write the important work *Errors and Expectations* (1977), started the study of what she called "Basic Writing." The "Basic writing" program became very important in the growth of the WAC movement.

A fourth reason is related to the emergence of a new class of academic executives: these "managers" adopted the techniques of industrial management and applied them to the running of colleges and universities. Their purpose was to make instruction more effective, and university education more

accountable to society that supported and employed their "products"--the students. In the 1970s, the new academic executive discovered that the WAC was a useful tool for curricular reform as well as faculty development.

In the early 1970s, these social and institutional factors led to urgent demand for instruction in writing. When the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) results on writing ability was released, the public was both shocked and infuriated at the apparent failure of the schools to educate their children. The 1974 NAEP showed an apparent decline in some areas of secondary students' performance since the test was administered in 1969. The *Newsweek* December 9, 1975 cover story, entitled "Why Johnny Can't Write," discusses the issue of literacy (or rather illiteracy); the article concludes with this sentence: "Willy-nilly, the U.S. educational system is spawning a generation of semi-literates."

It is striking how these phenomena can be seen--although to different extents and in different versions--in Hong Kong in the 1990s. I have discussed in Chapter 1 the rapid expansion of tertiary education in Hong Kong, which was one of the factors that contributed to the decline in educational standards, in particular language standards in the last ten years or so. (See 1.3.2. and 1.3.3). I have also discussed in that Chapter the increasing amount of attention that has been paid to the teaching of writing in the last decade within HKU. (See 1.3.5). The educational needs in the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s are similar to those in Hong Kong in the 1990s; similarly, the programs that had emerged to meet the needs in the U.S. two or three decades ago could serve as reference for us in Hong Kong as we try to look for ways to redress our problems.

Some of the major features in these programs associated with the WAC

Movement within higher education include: arrangements for teachers other than those in the English Department to undergo short training on the teaching and evaluation of student writing (e.g., Carlton College); running faculty workshops to help non-English Department teachers to be more aware of students' writing and to encourage their students to keep working journals (e.g., Michigan Technological University); setting up writing labs and employing writing specialists as well as writing tutors (e.g., Central College); cooperation between the English Department and other departments in offering inter-departmental courses (e.g., the "course cluster" at Beaver College; and "writing link" courses at the University of Washington).

There is much, I believe, that we (in HKU) can learn from the WAC Movement. I shall attempt to make three points here. First, there needs to be a greater awareness among the administration and faculty members in HKU that writing is intimately related to learning, and that writing occurs in all teaching and learning situations, not only in English language classes. Teachers outside the English Centre must be willing to pay more attention to students' writing, to instructing them to write in ways which are appropriate in their own disciplines, or even to encourage their students to keep working journals. The University could provide teachers with more training in writing instruction by running short workshops. At the same time, the University has to recognize that research in the teaching of writing, as well as the teaching of writing itself, are serious academic pursuits and should not be considered as activities of secondary importance.

A second point has to do with the setting up of a writing laboratory, to be managed by one or more full-time writing specialists, and "writing fellows" (to be recruited perhaps from the postgraduate students in the English Department and the English Centre, or even those who belong to other

departments and have good writing skills). Besides providing help to students on an individual basis, the staff in the laboratory could also run short workshops on specialized topics (such as writing resumes and application letters, certain aspects of grammar, etc.); this will allow the English Centre to concentrate its resources on teaching formal classes, and not to have to deploy some of its manpower to running these workshops, as it does at present (see 1.2.3).

A third point is related to cooperation between the faculties in HKU and the English Centre. Collaboration as such could take place on at least two levels: first, faculties could provide the English Centre with resources, such as: information on the kinds of assignments they give to students, samples of completed assignments, and the criteria by which these assignments are assessed; and access to their lectures and tutorials. Second, faculties could think about possibilities of setting up "course clusters" or "writing-link" courses with the English Centre. There are, of course, all kinds of hurdles--administrative, financial, and relational--that need to be surmounted before these suggestions can be materialized.

#### **4.3. Application: A Writing Program for the "English for Arts Students" Course**

Based on the different approaches described above, a writing program to be taught in the first semester of the EAS students course is designed. In the following section, the objectives, structure, content, and teaching method of the course will be delineated.

##### **4.3.1. Objectives and theoretical underpinnings**

One of the objectives of the course will be to initiate students into the discourse community of HKU, or more specifically, to enable students to write in a manner which is acceptable to the lecturers and tutors in the Faculty of

Arts. Underlying this aim are two theoretical approaches to the teaching of writing. The first one is the social constructionist model. Proponents of this approach to the teaching of writing take into consideration the social setting and the community within which a piece of written work is produced. They believe that the audience is the primary concern, for it is the readers who determine the form the writing should take. (See 4.2.4).

This theoretical paradigm underlies the program in that the course will be a service course: its aim is to help students to satisfy the requirements set by their departments in the Arts Faculty. The major task, therefore, is to help our students write essays which will prove to be satisfactory to their departmental lecturers and tutors. The second model that underlies the program will be the current-traditional rhetoric paradigm, which emphasizes formal correctness. Advocates of this approach believe that writing is basically a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns, that learning to write "involves becoming skilled in identifying, internalizing, and executing these patterns" (Silva, 1990:14). The central concern then, is "the logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms" (Silva, 1990:14). The writing course is informed by this approach in that it emphasizes the importance of "form." It attempts, for example, to familiarize students with the structure of introductions and conclusions in the writings of disciplines related to the Humanities and Social Sciences. It also introduces students to the ways academics cite sources, quote, summarize, or paraphrase. Many of these ideas are borrowed from researchers who are associated with this paradigm. (See 4.2.2).

A second objective of the course will be to encourage students to see writing as a process so that they would learn to do their work stage by stage, and would learn to revise their writing over several drafts. The theoretical model

that forms the basis of this objective is the "process" approach (4.2.3). The program encourages students to look at each assignment as a writing process--which consists of drafting, revising, and editing--and not just as a task that is to be completed in one single sitting.

### 4.3.2. The Structure and Content of the Program

The program consists of six units, each of which introduces students to one or more "writing concepts." In each unit, the concept(s) is/are first explained in class by the teacher, who demonstrates to students how these concepts are used in authentic academic texts. Students are then asked to do an in-class exercise, after which they receive feedback and suggested answers from their teacher. Students' understanding of the concepts are further consolidated as they are required to do a take-home assignment. Both the exercises and the assignments are cumulative in nature, in that the concepts are reinforced in each subsequent piece of work. In diagrammatical form, the structure of the course looks like this:

Unit	Concept(s)	In-Class Exercise	Assignment
1	The Structure of Introductions	1	1 An Introduction
2	Referencing	2	2 A Critical review of articles
	- Paraphrasing		
	- Summarizing		
	- Quoting		
	- Evaluating arguments		
	- Writing Footnotes/ Endnotes		

- Compiling a  
Bibliography

3	Cohesion and Coherence	3	
4	Levels of Formality	4	
5	Levels of Assertiveness	5	
6	The Structure of Conclusions	6	3 Research Paper

The actual teaching process of the course is presented in Appendix 4.

Although the course has been designed for students in HKU, I believe it will also have relevance to similar academic settings elsewhere.

#### 4.4. Writing about Literature

A number of textbooks on writing about literature have been published in the last 20 years or so, for example, Cohen, 1973; Annas and Rosen, 1982; Roberts, 1983; Gordon, 1983; Barnet, 1985; Charters, 1991; Fabb and Durant, 1993; Spack, 1995.

The topics they cover range from reading strategies, responding to essay questions, the writing process, to documentation, and style. They also provide guidelines on how to write about different literary genres: fiction, poetry, drama, and films. In this section, I wish to concentrate on one aspect of these books: the types of papers that are usually assigned to students in courses on fiction chiefly because the module I shall describe in Chapter 6, which includes the reading and writing of literature, focuses on short stories. Eight of them have been mentioned by these textbook writers:

- 1) Explication: the task set before the student here is to "unfold" the meaning of the text by interpreting it passage by passage, sometimes line by line, or even word by word. An explication usually concentrates on details, in the case of a story, usually on a certain passage or a scene. This short section is often a key scene, a crucial conversation, or the opening or closing paragraphs which are related to the central idea(s) of the story.
- 2) Analysis: in analyzing a story, the student is asked to separate it into parts in order to study the whole. He is to first break the story into various parts, study each of them, and then select one aspect for discussion. This one "aspect" is usually one of the so-called "elements of fiction"--theme(s), characterization, plot, symbolism, point(s) of view....

While explication demands the student to examine a small section of the story, analysis goes further--it asks the student to look at a number of passages, or even the whole story, in order to find details which are related to the idea that he wishes to discuss.

- 3) Comparison and contrast: this kind of paper asks students to contrast two or more stories or two or more elements within a single story. For example, an assignment might involve the examination of a character of a story, and the task is to compare and contrast how the character is being looked at by other characters in the same story. While a student engages in comparison and contrast, he also employs the techniques of explication, interpretation, and analysis.
- 4) Critical reading journals: such a journal can serve a number of functions. Annas and Rosen (1982) suggest the following: i) explication or analysis of individual texts; ii) individual response, whether emotional, intellectual, or



political, to works of literature; iii) connections between literary works e.g., comparison and contrast between literary works, or connections between a literary work and a student's own life; v) arguments with, or further explorations of points brought up in class discussion; and iv) experiments in creative writing, in the form of a character sketch, a poem, the opening of a short story....

- 5) Reactions papers: while explication and analysis are text-centered, a "reaction" is primarily reader-centered. The main thing to record is the student's personal response to the piece of literature he has read, and what it is in the text that has evoked that response.
- 6) Reviews: the review of a book is usually composed of three elements--a summary of the book, an evaluation of the work (its strengths and weaknesses), and a description of the reader's response.
- 7) Research papers: a research paper goes beyond the analysis and explication of the text, and beyond the student's personal response; it might ask a student to find out more about a particular writer's life and times and examine the literary work in that context. Another possibility is to read what critics have said about a literary work, and then examine the student's own thoughts in the light of others' criticism.
- 8) Reading into writing assignments: there are textbooks that combine reading and writing assignments. A short story, a play, or a poem, is followed by specific writing tasks.

#### **4.5. Application: The Writing Component in the "Reading and Writing about Literature" Module**

In designing the writing component of the "Reading and Writing about Literature" module, the insight gained from the content-based syllabus, as well as the textbooks on writing about literature are very helpful. The module is based on the reading of four short stories by Maxine Hong Kingston; the reading of the stories is followed by writing assignments in which students write an analysis of, as well as their response to the four stories. There is an obvious link between the subject (literature) and the kinds of essays that the discipline requires. The four writing assignments (as delineated in 6.2.1) give students the opportunity to practice writing the first four kinds of paper discussed in 4.4.

#### **4.6. Summary**

In this chapter, I began by examining five approaches to the teaching of writing, which include those that focus on grammatical form, rhetorical form, the writer, the reader, and content, and discussed their relevance to the HKU context. Based on this discussion, I have established principles for the broad outline of a writing program (and included details of each of the units in Appendix 4). The program is to be taught in the first half of the proposed EAS program. I then went on to look at eight major types of essays discussed in textbooks on writing about literature, including explication, analysis, comparison and contrast, critical reading journals, reaction papers, reviews, and reading into writing assignments. My discussion of these different kinds of assignment contributes to my design of a "reading and writing about literature" module, which is described in Chapter 6, and is to be taught in the second half of the EAS course.

## Endnotes to Chapter 4

1. I take heed of Silva's (1993) warning that there are distinct differences between L1 and L2 writing. Silva, however, is concerned with the writing process as well as the products of writing; whereas my focus is on writing pedagogy. I have therefore not limited myself exclusively to L2 instructional methods because almost all the approaches to the teaching of writing discussed in this chapter have evolved from L1 writing theories.
2. See Lam (1981), for example, for an extensive study of these mistakes.
3. In his bibliographical essay on social constructionism, Bruffee (1986) says that "Kuhn seems to be the father of current social constructionist thought insofar as direct influence is concerned" (p.779). He goes on to say that [b]ehind Kuhn lies Wittgenstein, and behind Rorty (who generalizes Kuhn) Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey" (p.779). As for the influence of social constructionist thought in literary criticism and literary history, Bruffee traces two major lines of thinking: Bakhtin, who, throughout his work, "stresses the 'voices' in literary language that are traceable to a diversity of social groups and that result in what he calls the 'dialogic' quality of literary language"; and Rorty, who suggests that "literary critics should assume no general or a priori truths about the nature of literature and language"; instead, they should maintain that "literature is a social artifact" but should not assume that "understanding of literature is the 'real truth' from which certain 'consequences' inevitably follow" (p.783).

## CHAPTER 5: INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

### 5.1. Introduction

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, I have examined curriculum theories, reading and literary theories, as well as writing theories in order to construct a curricular framework in which a content (literature) based language module could be taught in the English for Arts Students (EAS) course. My next step is to look for suitable content, that is, literature that could be used as pedagogical materials in the curriculum. I argue in this chapter that Chinese American literature should be used. More specifically, I contend that writings by Chinese American women writers are particularly suitable. For the syllabus I wrote for the module that was taught in 1996-1997, I used four stories by Maxine Hong Kingston, who was born and grew up in America, and who writes about the experience of the Chinese in America, of those who lived in the past (since the mid-19th Century) as well as in those who live in present America. These stories will be discussed in the light of their suitability for the module I attempt to construct.

### 5.2. Criteria for the Selection of Instructional Materials

In deciding what literary materials to use, three kinds of criteria need to be considered: those related to the students to whom the literary materials will be taught; those related to the educational context in which the teaching takes place; and those related to the nature of the literary materials.

#### 5.2.1. Factors Related to Students

Lazar (1993) suggests three kinds of background that should be considered when selecting literary materials for students; they are "cultural background," "linguistic proficiency," and "literary background." I add a fourth, "gender." My task here is to select literary materials for first-year students in HKU.

Although it would be impossible to come up with a homogeneous profile of these students, they can, in broad terms, be characterized as follows:

In terms of cultural background, they are Chinese young people, between 18 and 22 years of age; most of them come from lower-middle, or working class families where English is not used in their daily lives, where they have little exposure to Western culture; most of them have not travelled to Britain, the United States, or Europe. (See 1.3.2). In terms of the amount of exposure to English, they have had 13 years of English instruction in school. (See 1.2.4). In terms of literary competence, a small minority of them have taken "English Literature" as a school subject before they come to University. (See 1.2.4, 1.3.2). In terms of gender, most of these students are females.

#### **5.2.2. Factors Related to the Educational Context**

The materials to be selected in this curriculum will be used in the second half of the EAS course, in the form of a module. The module is taken by first-year students who are also taking "Introduction to Literary Studies in English" (ILSE) in the English Department. Three factors need to be taken into consideration: First, it is necessary not to duplicate materials that are used in ILSE, lest students find the EAS module to be a repetition of what they are already learning; second, the materials to be selected for the EAS module need to be similar, in terms of linguistic difficulty and literary value, to the literary materials that are used in ILSE, as the purpose of the latter course is to help students become better performers in the former course; and third, because the EAS course is non-credit bearing, maintaining students' motivation and interest is of crucial importance; if students are not motivated or interested, they will not learn much from the module (see 1.3.1).

#### **5.2.3. Factors Related to Literary Materials**

A review of related literature shows that there are mainly three criteria that

researchers/teachers use to select literary materials for their ESL students; they are: linguistic suitability, stylistic appropriateness, and relevance of subject matter and themes. I shall discuss these criteria separately.

### Linguistic suitability

Researchers have made the following suggestions about the kind of language to be found in appropriate teaching materials: it should be natural and direct (Povey, 1984), a product of good writing skills (Wright, 1993), not too difficult (Icoz, 1992), contemporary (Adeyanju 1978; Gwin, 1990); the literary piece should be short (Adeyanju, 1978), yet complete (Marckwardt, 1981; Cook, 1986). Gwin (1990) further suggests that the language should be "challenging but not overwhelming," and, borrowing Krashen's terminology, that the level of difficulty should be "i + 1" (Krashen, 1985). Murdoch (1992) thinks that "it is clearly important that texts for [such] courses should be within the range of students in straight-forward language terms," that "it is important too, to consider students' reading speed and reading habits, and to select a text that can be digested in the time available for the course" (1992:3).

Many of these comments are fair and justified, and are applicable to the curriculum that I am proposing. But it is important to point out that most of these writers have in mind courses that are different from my own: the purpose of their courses is to teach language through literature, whereas my aim is to teach students to read literature and to write about it; the acquisition of language is a (natural) by-product, not the major aim--this is a distinction I have explained in the "Introduction to the Thesis," under the heading "Definition of Scope."

Secondly, unlike the courses these writers have in mind, where the teachers have maximum freedom to choose materials they consider to be appropriate

for their students, my course is constrained by an important factor: one of its main purposes is to help students to function effectively in their studies in the English Department (see "Definition of Scope" in "Introduction to Thesis"). Therefore, the materials chosen for my course should, as far as possible, match those used by the English Department (see 5.2.2 above), but also of general relevance so that they could be applied to similar situations outside Hong Kong.

### Stylistic appropriateness

The criteria suggested by researchers under this category include:

1) The style should be contemporary: Murdoch (1992) contends that "modern prose texts that feature a lot of dialogue and contemporary forms of expression are likely to appeal strongly to students," and that "there is little point in choosing texts that highlight particular regional dialects" (p.3). Gwin (1990) makes a similar comment: "I prefer not to pile onto my students any additional burdens caused by having to interpret archaic languages, unfamiliar dialects, or unusual stylistic devices" (p.3). Basturkmen (1990) further suggests using "the works of writers who employ a simple style, e.g., the poet Robert Frost or novelist Ernest Hemingway" (p.19). Of course, as she is quick to point out, "simple style" does not necessarily imply shallowness in theme and subject matter.

These points are well taken, especially in consideration of the fact that the EAS course is not credit bearing (see 5.2.2); sustaining the interest of the students therefore takes extra effort, and texts written in difficult style will lead to frustration and annoyance, rather than enjoyment. Nevertheless, there is a possible danger of equating contemporaneity with lack of difficulty. This is not necessarily true: some contemporary texts are probably more difficult to comprehend than "older" texts. The works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf,

for example, in which techniques such as "stream of consciousness" are used, are probably more difficult for non-native speakers (and, I suspect, for native speakers as well) than some 19th century novels (e.g, those by Jane Austen or Charles Dickens) whose language is more straight-forward and easier to understand.

### Relevance and interest of subject matter

Researchers have made extensive comments on this area. They have pointed out that materials selected should:

- 1) be interesting and relevant (Littlewood, 1986; Murdoch, 1992);
- 2) have a familiar setting (familiar to the students who are studying the literary works) (Povey, 1979; Gwin, 1990; Murdoch, 1992), a human situation that students can relate to (Gwin, 1990), experiences that are close to students' age (McKay, 1986; Basturkmen, 1990; Icoz, 1992); 3) have universal appeal (Wright, 1993), contain themes that are universal in nature (Basturkmen, 1990), are natural representations of life and human relationships (Murdoch, 1992), and attractive (Adeyanju, 1978).

Although "interest," "relevance," "familiar setting," (1) "human situations that students can relate to," and "attractiveness" are rather vague terms, they can be defined within specific contexts, in terms of the students to whom the literary texts will be taught; yet, criteria such as "universal appeal," "themes that are universal in nature," "natural representations of life and human relationships" are contentious and problematical. Surely, what appeals to one age group may not appeal to another; so-called "universal" themes such as "love," "death," "friendship" may have different meanings for different cultures; and what is considered to be "natural" to one people in one society may appear to be awkward, strange, or shocking to people from another background. Hence, I find those listed under 1) and 2) to be useful and



acceptable, but those under 3) to be doubtful as selection criteria.

As for the reasons underlying the importance of relevance and interests, several reasons have been suggested by researchers. As far as relevance is concerned, Brock (1990) cites research that examines the process of reading (Gatbonton and Tucker, 1971; Johnson, 1981; Steffensen et al, 1979) and argues that "successful reading depends more on the reader's background knowledge than on the use of so-called decoding skills, such as phonics" (p.22). In other words, the more familiar the reader is with the cultural assumptions that underlie a text, the better the reader will be able to to comprehend the text, and the more enjoyment he will be able to derive from it. Furthermore, Floyd and Carrell (1987) have shown that students who are familiar with the cultural content of a text performed equally well on texts with differing syntactic complexity. They therefore conclude that, when choosing a literary text, syntactic complexity should be less a concern than cultural familiarity.

Regarding the interest factor, Coady (1979) advises that reading materials should be of high interest to the reader, for an interesting story will motivate students to keep on reading even when the syntax may be difficult. Hirvela and Boyle (1988) make a similar point: they say that novels that have direct relevance to the reader's experience will enhance the reader's interest and motivation, more than one that has a remote and unfamiliar setting. Paulston and Bruder (1976) point out that texts with a familiar setting are easier for the reader to relate to. The familiar setting not only increases the reader's interest, but also activates background knowledge that can facilitate reading comprehension. Littlewood (1986) adds that such a setting would enable the reader to enter the fictional world as an "involved 'onlooker'" (p.181).

### 5.3. Localized Literature

The three criteria mentioned above lend easy support to the arguments put forward by those who advocate the use of "localized" (e.g., Brock, 1990) or "non-native" (Kachru, 1986; Pugh, 1989) literatures in the ESL (literature) classroom.

Before I present arguments that support the use of localized literatures, it is necessary to first define the term "localized" or "non-native" literature.

Brock (1990) identifies three types of "localized" literature: 1) English translations of L1 literary texts--these could include folk tales, religious myths, poetry, short stories, even novels. 2) Literature written by native speakers of English but with a "local" setting; for example, E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (about India), Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (about Congo), Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* (about China), Joyce Cary's *Mr. Johnson* (about Africa). 3) "Non-native" literature (sometimes known as Commonwealth literature or "Contact" literature), written by writers belonging to countries where English is one of the official languages but is not spoken as a first language by the majority of the population. In Asia, countries which have produced for themselves a corpus of literature written in English include India, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines.

Localized literature seems to meet many of the criteria concerning the selection of literary materials, as discussed in 5.2. As Brock (1990) puts it, localized literature is particularly suitable for the ESL classroom because it "contains content, settings, cultural assumptions, situations, characters, language, and historical references that are familiar to the second language reader" (p.23).

Arguing for the inclusion of non-native literature in the literature curriculum (for ESL learners), Pugh (1989) makes a number of valid points, many of which are

the same as Brock's (1990), but two of which are different, and deserve special mention here. First, she points out that "students studying [localized literature] are in a position to observe not only how English is affecting them, but how they and other... speakers [of English] are affecting the language" (p.323); second, in literature classrooms where the teacher is a native speaker of English and the students non-native speakers, the use of non-native literature would generate interesting discussion, for the literary works provide opportunities for students to be explainers and interpreters of the works.

I find these two points to be interesting and challenging, and very relevant to the situation in Hong Kong. Because of the way they have been educated, our students tend to be passive learners and regard their teachers as authorities. They are used to listening to the teacher, taking notes, and regurgitating them in examinations (2). This is particularly true in an English literature class, where students study a foreign language, and learn about a foreign culture. Furthermore, even if they have personal opinions or points of view to express, they have to do so through a foreign language. All these factors contribute to the motivation of "playing safe"--to remember standard answers and reproduce them on examination papers. But the use of localized or non-native literatures could reverse this trend to some extent. They are in a position, as Pugh puts it, to explain and interpret the literature in a way the teacher (if he is a Westerner) cannot. This point will be elaborated in 5.4 when I discuss Chinese American literature.

A further reason for using non-native literature is put forward by Kachru (1986), who points out that in countries like Singapore, India, or Kenya (Hong Kong can certainly be added to the list), English is not taught for "integrative" purposes but for "instrumental" motivation, and concludes that "[t]herefore, the use of non-native English literatures may be more appropriate" (p.148). Brock

(1990:24) elaborates on this point by refuting three fallacies that seem to have prevailed among ESL specialists: the belief that ESL learners will use English primarily for interaction with native speakers; the belief that most ESL students study English in order to understand American or British culture; and the belief that ESL learners want to appear native-like when speaking or writing English.

I agree with Kachru and Brock, and believe that what they have pointed out is true of the Hong Kong situation. Many of our students, I believe, choose to study English literature not so much because they admire British or American culture, but because they think that a good mastery of the English language will afford them with better opportunities to find jobs and to advance in their careers in future.

The last reason for using localized literatures is for nation-building, for the building of a national character and the instillation of national values. This point has been made by educationalists/teachers of countries which were former colonies; for example: Kachar and Thomas (1982), about Malaysia; Cuna (1982) about the Philippines; Baried (1982) about Indonesia; Ngugi (1986), about Kenya; Paranjape (1993), about India.

This reason for using localized literature, strong as it is, does not seem applicable to the Hong Kong context, on at least three counts. First, as I have pointed out in 1.3.4., unlike many of these former colonies, Hong Kong does not have a substantial corpus of its own literature written in English. Although there are native speakers of English who have written about Hong Kong (3), most of the local writers have chosen to write in Chinese. Second, unlike most of these countries which, after independence, face the task of building (or re-building) a nation, or, in the case of Malaysia, of integrating and uniting the different ethnic groups within the country (Kachar and Thomas, 1982), Hong

Kong is to revert to Chinese rule and to become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in July, 1997. (See 1.2.2).

Third, unlike many of these former colonies, Hong Kong does not have the problems of defining a national literature (as Malaysia did, see, for example, Kachar and Thomas, 1982; Baried, 1982) (4) or the problem of setting up a department to teach its own national literature (as Kenya did, see for example Ngugi, 1972). Although Hong Kong has been under British rule for more than 100 years, Chinese literature has always been taught, both on the secondary and tertiary levels. In the University of Hong Kong (HKU), soon after the University was founded (in 1911), Chinese Literature was introduced as a subject in 1913 (Harrison, 1962b). Students in the Chinese Department study both classical and modern Chinese literature, and write their papers and examinations in Chinese.

Given these considerations then, if the case of teaching localized literature (in English) is valid for Hong Kong, what kind of literature should be taught? I propose that more Chinese American literature should be introduced into the literature curriculum in HKU (5).

#### **5.4. Chinese American Literature**

This section contains three parts: first, I will define what I mean by "Chinese American Literature"; second, I will explain why, among the many Chinese American writers, I have chosen Maxine Hong Kingston for close study; third, I will turn my attention to two of Kingston's major works, *The Woman Warrior* (1976) and *China Men* (1980), which contain the four stories that I use in a module, described in Chapter 6. I shall discuss these novels in the light of their suitability as pedagogical materials for our first-year students.

#### 5.4.1. Defining Chinese American Literature

I refer to the three criteria I used in the "Introduction to the Thesis" (under "Definition of Terms") to define "English Literature": the nationality of the writer, the language the writer uses to produce his works, and the subject matter(s) of the literary works. I explained in the "Introduction" that by "English Literature," I mean literary works written in English, regardless of the writer's nationality or the subject matter(s) that he chooses to write about. I now apply the same definition to the term "Chinese American Literature": it refers to works by writers of Chinese ethnic origin, who were either born or emigrated to America, and who choose to write in English. This will exclude novelists such as Chen Roxi and Wu Lihua, (see Footnotes 7 and 9 in "Introduction to the Thesis").

#### 5.4.2. Maxine Hong Kingston

I do not propose that Maxine Hong Kingston is the best Chinese American writer or that her works will serve as the best pedagogical materials. It is far too presumptuous to make such a claim; and indeed, such a claim is difficult to substantiate, for there are many other writers belonging to the tradition of "Chinese American Literature" (as defined above) that deserve to be studied, and are studied in literature courses in the United States and in other parts of the world. I will not, therefore, attempt to compare Kingston's works to those written by others or to argue that hers are superior. Such a comparison, I believe, is both fruitless and unnecessary. Instead, what I propose to do is to present the case that Kingston's works deserve careful study. I shall give three reasons to substantiate my case. First, Maxine Hong Kingston's two books, *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* (6), have attracted much attention since their publication in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. They have received both overwhelming praise as well as angry condemnations. Because of the

amount of attention the books have been able to attract, and the controversy they have generated, they make interesting materials for discussion. Second, Maxine Hong Kingston is generally recognized as one of the most important writers in the field of "Asian American Literature" (see, for example, Kim, 1982; Ling, 1990c; Wong 1993). Although the history of the field could be traced all the way back to the turn of the century (7), the year 1976--when *The Woman Warrior* was published--was often recognized as a milestone and an important historical moment in this literary tradition (Wong, 1993). *China Men*, which was published four years later, also generated enthusiastic response and heated debate from the reading public.

The appearance of Maxine Hong Kingston's books brought about mixed reactions. On the positive side: *The Woman Warrior* won the National Book Critics Award in the U.S.A., and *China Men* underwent six editions in four months' time. In 1979, three years after *The Woman Warrior* appeared, Kingston was "admitted" into the *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*, an indication of the academic world's recognition of Kingston as a significant writer.

Lau (1983) called the reactions to the two books "a series of miracles" (p.67). Some of these reactions were assembled by Ling (1990c): e.g., Jane Kramer (1976) praised *The Woman Warrior* for being "a brilliant memoir," and for being "as fierce as a warrior's voice and as eloquent as any artist's." Susan Brownmiller (1977) applauded Kingston as the "most exciting new writer in years," and *The Woman Warrior* as "a brilliant polished gemstone." In the same year, Sara Blackburn wrote the following about *The Woman Warrior* in *Ms.*: "The searing, beautiful memoir...this dazzling mixture of prerevolutionary Chinese village life and myth, set against its almost unbearable contradictions in contemporary American life, could unfold as almost a psychic transcript of

every woman I know--class, age, race, or ethnicity be damned. Here is the real meaning of America as melting pot." Three years later, in 1980, John Leonard, book critic, wrote in the *New York Times*: "Four years ago in this space, I said *The Woman Warrior* was the best book I had read in years. *China Men* is, at the very least, the best book I've read in four years since."

But there were less favorable responses too. Chinese American writers Frank Chin and Jeffrey Chan allege that Kingston's primary concern is the market place, that *The Woman Warrior* represents her attempts to cash in on a "feminist fad" (Kim, 1982:168). Ben Tong, a Chinese American psychologist and writer, goes further to accuse Kingston of "selling out...her own people." Kim (1982:198-199) summarizes Tong's main arguments:

[Kingston addresses] herself to a predominantly white readership and giftbox[es] old cliches about China and Chinese Americans, thereby obscuring the fact that Chinese Americans are not exotic foreigners but have deep roots in American life."...

Tong classifies Kingston's work as "white-pleasing auto-biography passing for pop cultural anthropology" (quoted in Kim, 1982:198). He even contends that in order to sell her books, she depicts Chinese American women as superior to the men, indeed, as victims of "perpetual torment at the hands of awful yellow men" who do not "perpetuate Cantonese culture and traditions as their long-suffering female counterparts do" (quoted in Kim, 1982:198).

Joseph Lau, a Hong Kong born professor of modern Chinese literature at the University of Wisconsin, believes that the books were over-praised. Lau is particularly critical of the allusions Kingston makes to classical Chinese literature. He says,



When Tong Ting Ting (Kingston's Chinese name) was a child, she was probably rather naughty, her parents would accordingly make up stories to scare her and to appeal to Confucius as the authority -- "Confucius says." This is understandable. However, although Tong Ting Ting is well-versed in Western literature, I'm afraid she has very little understanding of traditional Chinese customs and beliefs. Although we are both Chinese and share the same Chinese heritage, yet our interpretation of what constitutes "Chineseness" is so different--mine is indigenous, hers is foreign. Her understanding of China comes from what she has heard, it comes from her imagination. That is the heart of the problem (Lau, 1983:80, my translation).

That the books were able to generate such a mixture of different responses and controversy makes them interesting pedagogical materials, for the students to whom the books will be taught in my proposed course are bound to, I believe, have their own responses too. Unlike Brownmiller, Kramer, Blackburn, and Leonard, Americans who probably have little understanding of Chinese classical literature or customs; or Chin and Chan who themselves are Chinese Americans; or Lau, who is a sinologist, our students are a very different audience. They are, to borrow Chow's term, different "ethnic spectators" (Chow, 1991). Unlike the non-Chinese American critics mentioned above, our students will quickly recognize the many allusions Kingston makes to the Chinese myths in her stories; unlike Chin and Chan, our students have never lived in America, and will probably not share the anger these male Chinese Americans felt for Kingston, for her "crime" of selling out her own people. On the other hand, like Lau, they will recognize that Kingston "got her facts wrong"--that many of the myths were distorted, for our students have grown up in Hong Kong, and have had a basic training in Chinese literature; but would they react in the same way as Lau did? I think, therefore,

that our students' unique background--their proximity to Kingston (both share the Chinese roots, and for most of our students, the female identity); as well as their distance from Kingston (our students did not grow up in America and do not have a first-hand understanding of what it is like to be a Chinese and live in America)--will enable them to react to the books in a way which might be very different from the afore-mentioned critics.

The second reason why *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* are considered to be important works is because they can be read, and indeed are taught on many levels and from different perspectives. Lim (1991) conducted a survey on the kinds of courses in which the two books, especially *The Woman Warrior*, are taught in American universities. The survey reveals that the books are used in a wide range of courses, such as English literature, American culture and thought, ethnic studies, American history, comparative literature, women's studies, folklore, popular culture, California regional literature, and Asian American studies courses. They are also taught in freshmen and sophomore writing courses where the stories are used as rhetorical models. Similarly, the books can be used in HKU in writing classes, such as the one I am proposing, as well as literature courses, where students are introduced to American culture and literature, as well as different approaches to studying fiction.

My third reason for arguing that the books deserve careful study is because of their suitability as instructional materials. Because of the limitation of time, it is not possible to teach all the stories (in the two books) in the module that I propose. Only "No Name Woman" and "White Tigers" from *The Woman Warrior*; as well as "The Father from China" and "The American Father" from *China Men* are chosen as teaching materials for the two units described in Chapter 6. The reason why I have chosen "intensive," rather than "extensive"

reading has been explained in 2.3.

In 5.2, I have listed three sets of criteria that I think need to be considered for the selection of instructional materials; they are: factors related to the students to whom the materials will be taught; factors related to the educational context in which the materials are used; and factors related to the nature of the materials themselves. To what extent do *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* match these criteria?

### Factors Related to Students

My task here is to select materials for a literature-based language module to be taught to first-year Chinese students in HKU in the second half of the EAS course. Most of the students are females between 18-22, and are studying English Literature for the first time (see 5.2.1). I believe the stories in these books will appeal to the students. In terms of cultural background, although these stories are written by an American writer and much of them are set in American historical, social, and geographical contexts, they contain allusions to settings, customs, values, and myths that are familiar to our students. In terms of linguistic level, the first story in *The Woman Warrior*, entitled "No Name Woman," might be slightly difficult because of the vocabulary that Kingston uses (the degree of difficulty can be reduced by providing students with a glossary), students should find the other stories manageable. In terms of literary style, although "No Name Woman" may appear to be slightly difficult at first sight--with two inter-mingled voices and a plot that oscillates between past and present, reality and fantasy--students, I believe, should have no problems following it, especially when they are taken through the story slowly and step by step. "White Tigers" follows the structure of a "wuxia" (swordsman, commonly called "kung fu") novel, a genre that most students are familiar with. "The Father from China" and "The American Father" have rather

straight-forward plots and therefore should pose no difficulty for the students. In terms of gender, as most of the students are females, they would probably find the Daughter's attempts to relate to both parents interesting and relevant to their own experiences. This last reason might seem rather simplistic at first sight--females empathize with females, and males with males---but this may not necessarily be so. Given the fact that Chinese families tend to value sons more than daughters, and hence treat them differently, the struggles that the Daughter experiences (as Kingston describes them), could probably be more easily understood by Chinese female students than their male counterparts.

#### Factors Related to the Educational Context

In 5.2.2., I explained that three factors need to be considered under this criteria: the materials used for the module should not duplicate those used in the ILSE course, as students are taking both courses simultaneously, and will find the module uninteresting if it repeats what is being taught in ILSE. On the other hand, as the EAS module aims at helping students to cope with their studies in ILSE, the materials used in the module should be as similar--in terms of linguistic difficulty and literary style--to those used in ILSE as possible. Lastly, because EAS is a non-credit bearing course, interesting materials should be chosen to maintain students' motivation. I think these stories meet these criteria. Whether students agree with my choice is discussed in 6.3.

#### Factors Related to the Nature of the Materials

In 5.2, I mentioned linguistic suitability, stylistic appropriateness, relevance and interest of subject matter as ways of measuring whether certain literary materials are suitable for students. I also discussed the advantages of using localized literature; and that we, in Hong Kong, in the absence of a corpus of good localized literature written in English, could appeal to Chinese American literature. In the following section, I will first give a factual description of *The*

*Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, and then discuss to what extent they will serve as suitable instructional materials for our students.

Before I proceed on to the account and the discussion, two points need to be made: first, although the stories in each of the books are inter-related to form a coherent whole, I will concentrate on the four stories that will be used in the module. Second, although the two books can be read in many different ways, I will focus on the following aspects: structure, themes, and characterization; as well as language, voices of the narrator, and audience(s). The reason for focusing on these aspects has to do with the approaches I have chosen to use in teaching the stories, which are mainly "text-based." (See 3.4 and 6.2).

#### **5.5. *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men***

Although *The Woman Warrior* was published in 1976, and *China Men* four years later, Kingston says that she wrote the two books together, having "conceived of them as an interlocking story about the lives of men and women" (quoted in Kim, 1982:207). Structurally, both books contain a collection of short stories. The number of stories in each book, however, is different: *The Woman Warrior* has five stories, and *China Men* has 18. The stories are carefully arranged so that they form a movement and a unity.

Thematically, there are three major threads that underlie and run through the two books. On the broadest level, the books document the experience of Chinese men and women in America--their struggles, agonies, failures, and victories. On a more focused level, the two works are about a daughter's (possibly the writer herself) relationship with her parents. *The Woman Warrior* is inspired by Kingston's mother, *China Men* by her father. The Mother is a strong, dominating woman who talks stories to the Daughter all the time, the

Daughter has to fight her in order to find her own voice. The Father, on the other hand, is silent most of the time. The only time he talks is when he vents misogynist curses. "Every day we listened to you swear," the Daughter tells her Father, years later, "Dog vomit, Your mother's cunt. Your mother's smelly cunt" (Kingston, 1980:12). The Daughter has to talk *for* her father, she has to tell his stories in order to know him, to learn about his past, his history. On the most personal level, the books can be read as the Daughter's search for self-identity. She does so by looking into the history of her parents (the remote, historical China) and reconciling this with the American reality within which she lives.

As far as characterization is concerned, *The Woman Warrior* concentrates on women, including the Daughter in her various incarnations--the writer, the narrator, the myth-maker, the woman warrior (Fa Mu Lan); the Mother (Brave Orchid); Brave Orchid's sister-in-law, the "Drowned-in the-Well Aunt" (the No Name woman); Brave Orchid's sister, Moon Orchid; and the historical figure T'sai Yen. These women, of course, can be seen on two levels: they are individuals; but are also representations of different kinds of Chinese American women. *China Men*, on the other hand, is about four generations of Chinese men, represented by Great grandfather, Grandfather, Father, a few uncles, and Brother. Again, these are individuals from the Hong family, but are also representations of China Men in America.

#### **5.5.1. *The Woman Warrior***

*The Woman Warrior* consists of five stories, "No Name Woman," "White Tigers," "Shaman," "At Western Palace," and "A Song for the Barbarian Reed Pipe." In the following summary and discussion of the book, I will concentrate on the first two, as they will be used as teaching materials in the first two units in the module. (See Chapter 6.2.).

At the beginning of the first story, "No Name Woman," we hear the Mother telling the Daughter: "'You must not tell anyone,' my mother said, 'what I am about to tell you. In China, your father had a sister who killed herself. She jumped into the family well'" (p.11). (8) The "drowned-in-the-well" aunt was the "No Name Woman." When the Aunt was of marriageable age, the family found her a husband in the neighboring village. In the wedding, she stood besides a rooster, the rooster being the substitute for the husband, who was in America. Later on, he returned for a short while but soon left for the Gold Mountain again. At this time, the Aunt was found to be pregnant by another man. How she became pregnant could only be speculated upon by the Daughter, for the Mother would not say anything about it. The Daughter, using her imagination, comes up with several possibilities:

Perhaps she had encountered him in the fields or on the mountain where the daughters-in-law collected fuel. Or perhaps he first noticed her in the marketplace... Perhaps he worked an adjoining field, or he sold her the cloth she sewed and wore. His demand must have surprised, then terrified her. She obeyed him; she always did as she was told (p.14).

Then she was raped (continually) by this villain. Another possibility was that the Aunt was "a wild woman, kept rollicking company" (p.16) and seduced some man into a sexual relationship. Still another possibility was that she had a secret lover, someone she met during the New Year celebration, a relative who came to visit the family.

The pregnancy was discovered, and one night, the villagers organized a raid against the Aunt's family. First they attacked the house by throwing mud and rocks at it; then they slaughtered the family's animals; following that, they

broke into the house, destroyed furniture, turned the kitchen upside down, and took away clothes and food as they left. The Aunt was pressed to confess her "sins" and to reveal the identity of the baby's father, but for some reason, she refused to do so. The day after the raid, the baby was born, the mother threw herself and the child into the family well and died.

The story is short, but is very complicated. First of all, it is set in two worlds: present America and historical China, the past and the present, myth and reality. Not only does the narrative oscillate between the two worlds, but also between facts and speculations, between actual conversation between Mother and Daughter and the imagination and inner outcries of the Daughter.

Furthermore, the story has two voices: the Mother's and the Daughter's. The Mother tells the story with the purpose of cautioning the Daughter against the danger of "committing sexual sins"; the Daughter reflects on the story, fills in the missing details, speculates the causes of the Aunt's final tragedy, tries to understand the status and the sufferings of the Aunt, as well as her own relationship with the Aunt in historical China; her relationship with her mother who now lives in America but who has deep roots in China; and then her own identity as a girl who grew up in America. There are also multiple speakers and audiences: first, it is the Mother who speaks and the Daughter who listens; then the Daughter appeals to Chinese Americans like herself who are trying hard to look for their identities; following this, the Daughter becomes the narrator and we (the readers) the audience; finally, the story ends with the Mother's voice again. With this multiplicity of voices, there are stories (the Daughter's speculations) within the larger story, the Mother's tale of caution.

That the story is placed at the beginning of the book, to be followed by four other stories, is significant. It serves at least three functions: first, it spells out one of the purposes of the book, which is an attempt to bridge the gap



between the Daughter's two lives, her roots in China and her life in America: "Those of us in the first American generations have had to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fit in solid America" (p.13). She has to reconcile her mother's stories with the reality in America. She wants to know whether she belongs to China or to America, whether she is Chinese or American? Chinese American? or American-Chinese? Secondly, the story explains the respective roles that the Mother and the Daughter play in the set of memoirs that follows: the Mother is the story-teller, the Daughter the creative editor; the Mother provides the skeleton, the Daughter fills in the details; the Mother draws the outline and sketches the contours, the Daughter adds the strokes and puts in the colors. Throughout the story, therefore, there are two voices, two viewpoints, two interpretations of what "actually happened." Thirdly, the story is important because it prepares the stage for the next story to appear. If the Aunt had not died so tragically, there would have been no need for the woman warrior to come on to the scene.

I think our students will find the story interesting and relevant to their own lives, for at least five reasons: first, the female students have probably heard various kind of tales of caution from their mothers, and will be able to compare "No Name Woman" with the ones they have heard. That it has personal relevance makes the story appealing and interesting. (See 5.2.2). Second, our students are well-acquainted with stories of "suffering" women like the Aunt as story books, Chinese movies, and television programs are filled with such narratives. Our students, unlike their counterparts in American colleges, should be able to "enter" into these stories quickly as there is little cultural barrier, an advantage that localized literature offers. (See 5.3). Third, students will, to a certain extent, identify with the Daughter's struggles as she searches for her identity. With the approach of 1997, many young adults who had grown up in Hong Kong are forced, perhaps for the first time in their lives, to

confront themselves with the question of national identity. Like Kingston, they need to ask similar questions: are they Chinese, Hong Kongese, or Hong Kong Chinese?

Fourth, although the plot of the Aunt's story is familiar to our students, the way it is told, including the two inter-mingled voices of Mother and Daughter; the various speculations as to what happened to the Aunt; the two worlds in which the story is set; the juxtaposition between present and past, facts and conjectures--is innovative, and would challenge them to re-think a genre they know so well. Fifth, because of its complicated plot, the multifarious voices, the intricate relationships between Mother, Daughter and Aunt, the story serves as excellent material for the exemplification of some of the Todorov's concepts related to literary texts, concepts such as "sjuzet" and "fabula"; "enonce" and "enonciation"; "figuration"; "the structure of narratives"; and "genres." These concepts are taught in the first unit in the module. (See 6.2.).

The second story in *The Woman Warrior* is entitled "White Tigers." It is about a legendary figure called Fa Mu Lan. As a little girl, she followed a bird into the mountains one day, and there she met two old people, who offered to train her as a warrior so that she could "learn how to fight barbarians and bandits" (p.28). She decided to stay, and would only see her family through a drinking gourd from time to time. For the first six years, she stayed in the mountains; by the end of that period her body became so strong that she "could control even the dilations of the pupils inside [her] irises" (p.29), and "could jump twenty feet into the air from a standstill, leaping like a monkey over the hut" (p.29). During the seventh year, she underwent a survival test in the mountains of the white tigers, where she fought tigers with burning branches, and was helped by her great grandfathers and other animals. For the last eight years, she was trained in "dragon ways." By 22, when she "could point at the sky and

make a sword appear, a silver bolt in the sunlight, and control its slashing with [her] mind" (p.37), the old people said she was ready to return to her homeland.

When Fa Mu Lan returned home, her parents were surprised and elated, for they thought that she had been lost forever. She then told her parents about her wish to enlist in the army on behalf of her father, who had no sons. Before her departure, her mother made her kneel before the ancestral tablets, took off her shirt, and her father carved revenge on her back, and inscribed on her "oaths and names" (p.38). During the course of the war, Fa Mu Lan won many battles, got married, and gave birth to a son. When the war was over, she returned to her husband's home and promised her in-laws that she would be a filial daughter and would give the family more sons. At the end of this story, the narrator (the Daughter in the first story) returns from the distant, mythical Chinese past to the American reality. The Daughter identifies with the woman warrior: she dreams of becoming Fa Mu Lan, to take vengeance on all those who have wronged her family, or indeed herself. But unlike Fa Mu Lan, she does not fight with a sword but with words:

The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar. May my people understand the resemblance soon so that I can return to them. What we have in common are the words at our back. The idioms for *revenge* are "report a crime" and "report to five families." The reporting is the vengeance--not the beheading, not the gutting, but the words. And I have so many words - "chink" words and "gook" words too--that they do not fit my skin (p.53).

This is the story I use in Unit 2 in the module (see 6.2.1). I have chosen the story for two reasons: first, to provide students with an opportunity to reflect

on the idea of "genre." Before reading this story, students are asked to read a fairy tale, a folk tale, and a detective story, and are asked to identify the characteristics of each of them. Then they are introduced to Propp's *Morphology of the FolkTale*, and to the "elements" that underlie Russian folk tales. They are then asked to think about "White Tigers" as a "wuxia xiaoshuo," or martial-arts novel, one type of fiction that students are very familiar with. They should be able to identify many of the elements that characterize the martial arts novels, for example: "struggle between good and evil (those who use their superhuman martial skills to uphold righteous values versus those who misuse them for self-aggrandisement); an arduous quest (for the right master, for magic elixirs or antidotes, for a secret instruction book, etc.) and attendant trials; years of endurance and tireless practice; revenge (avenging the murder of loved ones or domination by foreign invaders); and dramatic showdowns" (Wong, 1991:30).

But the story, of course, is not simply a straight-forward martial-arts story. Kingston uses it to serve a greater purpose, as has been explained above. Students could be challenged to think about the relationship between Fa Mu Lan and the Daughter: What are the similarities between them? In what ways are they both swordswomen? What is the object and the means of their revenge? Furthermore, students could be further challenged to think about the significance of the last few pages, where Kingston turns from Fa Mu Lan--who lived in distant, mystic China, who was at the same time a powerful woman warrior, a loving wife, and a loyal daughter-in-law who was to bear many sons for the family--to the Daughter in America, who struggles with her inferior status within the Chinese social context, and who, at the same time, strives to be "normal," to be accepted into the American mainstream culture. Does the last section alter the generic nature of "White Tigers"? Does it make it an autobiography more than a martial-arts story?

The second reason why I have chosen the story is because it contains many allusions to Chinese classical literature, myths, and histories, which students are familiar with; and more interestingly, because of the ways Kingston has made use of them. The story of Fa Mu Lan is loosely based on the "Ballad of Mulan," but Kingston's rendition differs from the original in at least three major ways: First, the original "Ballad" does not mention Mu Lan's childhood; the first part of "White Tigers" is therefore entirely fictional. Second, the tattooing episode is based on another traditional well-known story, that of Ngak Fei, a historical figure whose mother is said to have carved four characters on his back, encouraging him to serve his country with loyalty. Third, Kingston has incorporated elements of stories of peasant uprisings into her story, which are not in the original "Ballad."

Kingston's alterations of the original source has led some critics to accuse her of promoting a "fake" Chinese culture, for misusing classical literary sources due to her lack of understanding of Chinese literature (Lau, 1983), for sloppy scholarship and promoting crowd-pleasing exoticization (Chan, 1977; Fong, 1977; Tong, 1977; Chin, 1985). (See 5.4.2). Kingston defends herself against such accusations by saying that "myths have to change, be useful or be forgotten"; she says that "[I]ike the people who carry them across the oceans, the myths become American...The myths I write are American" (Kingston, 1991:24).

In line with what Kingston says, Wong (1991) argues that:

"...it is only by reading *The Woman Warrior* as an American book that we can make sense of its "Chinese" elements, which freely alter their sources in both spirit and letter" (p.26);

and that, ...every narrated event in *The Woman Warrior* has been mediated by the imagination and voice of the narrator-protagonist. As an American-born daughter of immigrants, the narrator has no direct access to Chinese realities. She must draw her own haphazard deductions and create a precarious coherence from the elaborate talk-story of the mother, her unexplained cultural practices, the behavior of immigrant neighbors in Stockton's small Chinatown, and later, from bilingual dictionaries and library research" (p.27).

Presented above are two areas that would generate discussion among our students. First, students could be asked why Kingston has made such changes to the original "Ballad," to serve what purpose? Second, students could be asked to discuss the controversy: which side do they side with? with Lau, Chan, Tong, Fong, and Chin? or with Wong and Kingston herself? and why?

"No Name Woman" is taught in the first unit in the proposed module, and "White Tigers" in the second unit. It would be profitable to teach the other three stories in the book ("Shaman," "At the Western Palace," and "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe") as well, for the five stories are inter-connected and form a unity. But because of the limitation of time (that can be allotted to the module), only two stories are chosen. The two stories are complete in themselves and can be used to exemplify certain approaches to literature, as explained in Chapter 6. It is hoped that the reading of these stories will whet the students' appetite for more, so that they will be inspired to finish reading the book.

### 5.5.2. *China Men*

The book has 18 stories. In the Picador edition of the book, 12 of these are in small type: "On Discovery," "On Fathers," "The Ghostmate," "On Mortality," "On Mortality again," "The Laws," "Alaska China Men," "The Wild Man of the Green Swamp," "The Adventures of Lo Bun Sun," "The Li Sao: An Elegy," "The Hundred-Year Old Man," and "On Listening." The other six stories are in bold type: "The Father from China," "The Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountains," "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains," "The Making of More Americans," "The American Father," and "The Brother in Vietnam." The first group of stories, (called "episodes" in the rest of this chapter), are usually rather short, ranging from half a page to a few pages, and those in the second group are much longer. The first group contains parables, re-written versions of stories from classical Chinese literature, or snapshots of the Chinese American community. They usually elucidate a single idea or theme which is more fully expounded in the longer stories. The longer stories usually have a central character. They are arranged (roughly speaking) in a chronological order and form a history of the Hong family; or, on a more macro level, a history of the Chinese in America from the 1840s to the 1970s.

In the following section, I shall discuss in detail the two stories that will be used in the module--"The Father from China" and "The American Father" in the light of their suitability as teaching materials; and then briefly comment on their relationship with the other four major stories in *China Men*.

An important underlying theme in "The Father from China" is men as victims and victors. The victim-turned-victor process is recycled three times in this story: First, when the Father was a baby, he was victimized by his father who traded him for a baby girl, but his disappearance was soon discovered by his mother who quickly brought him home. Second, when the Father arrived in

America, he was humiliated by "immigration demons" and was then detained, literally imprisoned on Angel Island, an island north of San Francisco, used for keeping Chinese immigrants until their turn to go into the country (the quota then was 100 per day). After a period of detention and a series of interrogations and examinations, the Father was allowed to enter America. Third, having left Angel Island, the Father travelled East and stayed in New York, where he started a laundry business with three other Chinese men. After a year of hard work, he saved enough money to bring his wife to America. Soon after the arrival of the wife, however, he was tricked by his friends and lost all his savings. Although he was once again victimized, the Father did not give up. Supported by his wife, he moved West, and settled in Stockton, California. After an initial period of adjustment, he purchased a laundry business, bought a house, and raised a family. Moreover, after all, it is California, not New York, that is the true America, "for some say [California] is the real Gold Mountain anyway" (p.75) (9).

"The Father from China" is used as teaching material in Unit 3 of the module (see 6.2.1). The main purpose of the unit is to introduce students to the idea of "unity" in a fictional narrative. Brooks, Purser, and Warren (1975) argue that, in a good story, plot, character, and theme are interwoven to form a coherent whole. I believe "The Father from China" illustrates this concept very well. Take the victim-turned victor transformation as an example. The structure of the story supports and brings out these themes. The narrative is simple and straight-forward: it is basically a chronological description of the Father's life, from his birth until he settled down in California. The Father went through three cycles of victimization-victory, as has been explained in the last paragraph. Regarding characterization, there is only one main character throughout the story, that is the Father himself. All the other characters, even the wife, who plays the major role in *The Woman Warrior*, are there to elucidate the



characterization of the Father. For students to come to an understanding of this "unity," therefore, should not be difficult.

Other exercises could be constructed to teach the concepts of plot, characterization, and theme. Regarding plot, one possibility is to ask students to consider these questions: Why has Kingston chosen a chronological narrative sequence, which is so different from the techniques she uses in "No Name Woman"? Would the story have been more interesting if she had weaved in sub-plots, employed techniques such as flashbacks, stream of consciousness, or multiple narrative voices, as she has used in "No Name Woman"? What inherent differences are there between "The Father from China" and "No Name Woman" that cause Kingston to use different narrative techniques? How is form related to content?

Another exercise on plot, one on a larger scale, is to ask students to read "On Fathers" first before they read "The Father from China." They could be asked to think about why Kingston has arranged for this episode to precede the story. The link between the two should be obvious: the short episode reveals how distant the father is from the children and how much the children crave to be close to him--both physically and psychologically; the story that follows is the Daughter's attempt to get to know the Father, by telling his story, by forcing him to correct her if she had told the story incorrectly. This exercise leads to a larger project: students could be challenged to read the whole book and to examine the place and function of the other episodes in relation to the other longer stories. Students could be asked to consider these questions: How do the episodes prepare the reader for the stories? What differences are there between the episodes and the stories besides their length?

Regarding characterization, students could be guided to think about the

different ways of looking at the portrayal of the Father: from the Daughter's description and comments; from the Father's words and actions; and from others comments about him.

As for theme, this story offers a very good opportunity for students to compare the Daughter's relationship with the Mother to her relationship with the Father. Students could be asked to find out as many differences as they can between these two kinds of relationships.

Besides plot, characterization, and theme, students could also be led to consider the language and style in the story. One possibility is to examine the Daughter's voice. These questions could be posed to students: To what extent is the Daughter's presence felt? Would the story have been very different had it been told by an omniscient narrator, or by the father himself? As for language, the kind of language used in "The Father from China" seems much easier to understand than that used in "No Name Woman." Students could be challenged to think about Kingston's choice of style and language: Why has she chosen to use different language for the two stories? How is language related to content?

The sequel to "The Father from China" is "The American Father," which is the second story in *China Men* which is taught in the module. The theme of victor-turned-victim, which underpins "The Father from China," continues to be developed in this story. The Father was now in Stockton, California, and was working for the "most powerful" Chinese-American there, who owned a gambling house. Despite his loyalty and dedication, the Father was exploited by his boss. But the Father at least had his job--the manager of the gambling house. In no time, however, even this was taken away from him when the gambling house was closed down by the police. The Father became a

disheartened man. He stayed at home all the time, did nothing but read the newspaper, and drank whisky. In the middle of the night, he would wake with a jerk or a scream. He felt tired and scared. The Father was again victimized, this time by his boss and the police. But the victim turned victor once more when he finally found a laundry shop he could take over. The business was gradually built up and at the end of the story, the Daughter-narrator concludes, "...my father at last owned his house and his business in America" (p.248).

"The Father from China" ends with the Father and Mother arriving in California. "The American Father" continues to tell the story of the Father when he started his life in Stockton. Although the main character in the second story is still the Father, and the narrative order is still (basically) chronological, it is different from the first story in several important ways: First, the Daughter-narrator was born by now, and her presence is therefore much more prominent; her authorial voice comes in frequently to comment on the development of the Father's life, and her own physical presence and actions become a part of the narrative. Second, unlike the first story which is largely a straight-forward narrative, the second story contains a much more complicated structure: there are constant juxtapositions of facts and conjectures (imagination on the part of the Daughter-narrator); as well as narrative events and the Daughter's thoughts. Third, while the first story is narrated with a certain objectivity, the second story is told with greater desperation, with a sense of urgency to find out the truth, to discover what is on the Father's mind. Instead of maintaining a distance, as in the first story, now the Daughter "barges in," to press the Father to speak up.

"The American Father" is taught in Unit 4 in the module (see 6.2.1), where a short excerpt is chosen for students to practice "starring" a text--an exercise that imitates Barthes's critical reading of Balzac's "Sarrasine." The purpose

and benefits of putting students through this rather laborious exercise has been explained in 3.4.3, and will be discussed in 6.2.1.

Besides, "The American Father" could also be used to introduce students to the concept of "binary oppositions" in literary texts, another important feature within the "Structuralist" tradition (see, for example, Culler, 1975). The story could provide students with the chance to explore the underlying texture and structure of a narrative text, as well as the various kinds of conflict that the Daughter as a female growing up in Stockton Chinatown experiences. This is a particularly good story for this purpose because it contains many contrasts, and they are not difficult to identify. Some of the more obvious ones are: China versus America, New York versus California, men versus women, Baba versus Mama, boys versus girls, brothers versus sisters, white girls versus girls of color, the rich versus the poor, the powerful versus the powerless, the majority versus the minority, the strong versus the weak, reality versus imagination, historical facts versus myths and faded memories. Through the description of these conflicts, the reversal of fortune is shown: in the first half of the story, the Father is oppressed, houseless, then jobless, and depressed; in the second half of the story, he has secured for himself a business, a house, and the assurance that he has finally become an American; he has, indeed, to borrow Kingston's term, "claimed America." In the first half of the story, the Daughter is unsure about her relationship with her father; by the end of the story, many of her conflicts have been resolved.

The other stories in *China Men* describe other male characters in the history of the century-long Chinese immigration process; they include: Bak Goong (literally Elder Grand Uncle), the main character in "The Great Grandfather of the Sandalwood Mountains," who worked in Hawaii as a plantation worker, and who suffered at the hands of his "masters"; Ah Goong (literally Grandfather),

the protagonist in "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada," who contributed his "blood and sweat," and almost his own life, to the building of the railway through the Sierra Nevada Mountains; Mad Sao, Kau Koong, Uncle Bun, and Uncle I-Fu, male relatives in "The Making of More Americans," who struggled between growing roots in America and returning to their native land in China; and the Brother, in "The Brother in Vietnam," who was torn between his identity as an American and a Chinese.

Like the "Father," each of these characters is one way or another victimized: detained and humiliated by immigration officers, reduced to laundry workers, cheated by lying gypsies, taunted by racists, beaten by plantation overseers, exploited by railway owners, rejected by both Asians and White Americans. But each of them, like the "Father," also claims victory in his own way: by refusing to be silenced, to be treated like pigs, slaves, non-humans, aliens, second-class citizens; by persisting, persevering, staying on, no matter how hard life is, so as to "claim America."

There is then, in terms of theme and characterization, a chain relationship between the six major stories; it is hoped, therefore, that, after having been introduced to two of them, students will be encouraged to read the others on their own.

In this section (5.5.1 and 5.5.2), I have, in the main, described the four stories by Maxine Hong Kingston which will be used in the module (see Chapter 6), and have discussed them as instructional materials in the light of the criteria described in 5.2. I believe these stories will serve as suitable instructional materials for a curriculum I am proposing. How students evaluated the exercises is recorded and discussed in 6.3.

## 5.6. Summary

I began this chapter by describing criteria for the selection of materials for the teaching of literature in the ESL/EFL classroom. These criteria include those related to students, the educational context, and to literary materials. Under the third factor, I discussed three criteria: linguistic suitability, stylistic appropriateness, and relevance and interest of subject matter. Based on this discussion, I then went on to contend that localized literature seems to satisfy most of the criteria and is therefore one possible kind of materials that could be used in a literature curriculum. Since Hong Kong, unlike other former British colonies, does not have its own corpus of localized literature in English, I continued to argue that it would be appropriate to consider Chinese American literature as reading materials for first-year university students in Hong Kong. Among published Chinese American literary works, I proposed that stories from two books by Maxine Hong Kingston, namely *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men* could be selected for the module I taught to students in the "English for Arts Students" (EAS) course in 1996-1997. The stories in these books are described, and the four that are included in the module--"No Name Woman" and "White Tigers" from *The Woman Warrior*; as well as "The Father from China" and "The American Father" from *China Men*--are discussed as pedagogical materials in the light of the criteria I presented in the first half of the chapter.

## Endnotes to Chapter 5

1. In suggesting that "familiar setting" be a factor in the selection of materials for the proposed module, I seem to contradict a point I made earlier in Chapter 3. In 3.4, I suggested that students should be introduced to the Russian Formalists, and an important idea in Russian Formalism is "defamiliarization." "Familiar setting" and "defamiliarization" seem, at first sight, to be at odds with each other; but they don't have to be. In 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5, I argue that localized literature should be used, and in the case of Hong Kong, which lacks a corpus of its own localized literature in English, Chinese American literature could be introduced to students, because its "familiar setting" would help students enter the world of the literary texts. Would "familiar setting" then, undermine the effect "defamiliarization" will have on students? I contend that it would not, because I think when the Russian Formalists discuss "defamiliarization," they are concerned not so much with defamiliarizing content, but language. By the same token, although Chinese American literature, and in this case the stories written by Maxine Hong Kingston, have familiar settings, yet the language she uses, the method by which she narrates, and the ways she makes use of genres, Chinese classical stories, and allusions are not familiar to students. Students would therefore be forced to read the stories slowly and re-think issues that they might otherwise have taken for granted. The "defamiliarization" effect will still have an impact on them.
2. As I have explained in Endnote 5 in Chapter 1, I seem to have given the impression that I have portrayed students in Hong Kong to be docile receivers of Western knowledge (in this case English literature); I would, therefore, be accused of being "anglo-centric." As I have argued in Endnote 5 in Chapter 1, this is an erroneous interpretation of what I have tried to argue. I am asserting the fact that our students, who had been trained to be passive learners in their primary and secondary schooling,

due chiefly to the nature of examinations they have been trained to prepare for, should be encouraged to learn in a more active way. I am therefore making a distinction between active and passive learning, and not between "Eastern" and "Western" models of education. To equate passive learning with "Eastern" and active learning with "Western" model of education is a erroneous and groundless concept. Long before Socrates was born, Confucius in China had used the so-called "socratic" method of teaching.

3. Some of these writers are James Clavell, Jan Morris, Leslie Wilson.
4. A possible misunderstanding that might arise here is this: while I said in Chapter 1 (1.3.5) that there is much similarity between Malaysia and Hong Kong, and that Hong Kong could learn from Malaysia, here in Chapter 5, I claim that Malaysia is very different from Hong Kong. But there is in fact no contradiction between the two statements I have made. In Chapter 1, I discussed the curricular changes in the University of Malaya, and argued that we in Hong Kong should learn from such reforms because the situation in Malaysia in the 1960s and 1970s are similar to the situation in Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, I argued that the factors that had led to curricular reforms in Malaysia some 20 to 25 years ago are also affecting Hong Kong at present. Whereas in Chapter 5, my focus is not on curricular reforms but on the use of localized literature in the language classrooms. I point out that Malaysia needs (for the purpose of establishing a national identity), and has built up for itself a corpus of localized literature; but Hong Kong lacks such localized literature (written in English) and therefore could turn to Chinese American literature.
5. I am of course not proposing that Chinese American literature should be taught to the exclusion of other American or British literature. I am merely advocating the inclusion of more Chinese American literature in literature courses.
6. Kingston's third book, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, published in



1989, is less well-known than the first two.

7. For a brief description of the literary tradition behind Maxine Hong Kingston, see Appendix 5a.
8. All quotations from *The Woman Warrior* in this thesis follow this edition of the book: *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*, 1976 (London: Picador).
9. All quotations from *China Men* in this thesis follow this edition of the book: *China Men*, 1980 (London: Picador).

# **PART III: A PROPOSED CURRICULUM**

## **CHAPTER 6: THE "READING AND WRITING ABOUT LITERATURE" MODULE**

### **6.1. Introduction**

I have explained in the "Introduction" that the purpose of this thesis is to argue for the necessity of instituting content-based language courses for students who are studying English literature as a foreign literature, and that my study focuses on the University of Hong Kong (HKU). In Chapter 1, I outlined five arguments to substantiate my contention. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, I discussed curriculum theories, reading and literary theories, as well as writing theories in order to seek for aspects of these theories on which the curriculum can be built. In Chapter 5, I looked at criteria for the selection of materials to be used in such a content-based language curriculum, and argued that Chinese American literary works will function well as pedagogical materials for our students in HKU. In this chapter, I will describe a syllabus, which is an example of the curriculum I am proposing; and will also describe a small-scale study which seeks to find out how students reacted to the syllabus (the module).

The module is written for first-year students in the Arts Faculty who are taking "Introduction to Literary Studies in English," (ILSE) (in the English Department), and "English for Arts Students" (EAS) (in the English Centre). The module is taught in the second term of the one-year EAS course. By this time, students have already had 24 hours of instruction in writing skills (see 4.3 and Appendix 4), and now the focus is turned to reading and writing about literature. The main purpose of the course is to help students to approach literature and to articulate their response to literature (in writing) in a clear and systematic way

so that they can cope with their work in ILSE.

Since the module aims at strengthening students' ability to become better learners in ILSE, it is necessary to understand what the course entails, and what its requirements are. ILSE introduces students to works of fiction (both novels and short stories), drama, and poetry. The literary works used in the 1996-1997 syllabus include: Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, Hemingway's *In Our Time*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Shaw's *Pygmalion*, and poems by Emily Dickinson and Wordsworth. Students are required to produce several essays throughout the year (which take up 40% of the final grade), and to sit a final examination (which takes up 60% of the overall score). As can be seen from these percentages, there is heavy emphasis on students' ability to express their opinions and present their arguments in writing. These are in fact typical features in many parts of the world.

Regarding class meetings, students attend both lectures and tutorials. The tutorials focus on the discussion of ideas in the literary works, but do not spend too much time on teaching students how to write about literary works. This is where the module comes in, to fill this gap.

Because of the limitation of time, the module can only focus on one of the literary types, and I have chosen fiction. (The reason for my choosing fiction, (short stories), as opposed to the novel, poetry, or drama, has been explained in "Organization of the Thesis," in the "Introduction.") There is no reason why other literary types cannot be used. One possibility is to develop other modules which concentrate on other types, to be offered in the second and third years. This, in fact, is my recommendation, which is discussed in the "Conclusion" of this thesis.

## 6.2. The Syllabus

The design of the module follows Tyler's (1949) suggestions on how to construct an ends-means curriculum (discussed in 2.4). The steps to building such a curriculum have been further modified by Taba (1962). They include:

Step 1: Diagnosis of needs

Step 2: Formulation of objectives

Step 3: Selection of content

Step 4: Organization of content

Step 5: Selection of learning experiences

Step 6: Organization of learning experiences

Step 7: Evaluation

### Step 1: Diagnosis of Needs

The design of the module is based mainly on the theoretical framework I have constructed in the last five chapters, and partly on a needs analysis, which is a part of a small-scale study, that I conducted in 1996. In the small scale study, needs (as perceived by students) were identified by asking two groups of EAS students (a total of 33 of them) to fill in, in the middle of the first semester of the academic year 1996-1997, a short questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire is to find out how much previous background these students had in the study of English Literature (i.e., before they came to university); and the kinds of difficulties they have encountered when they read and write about English literature when they study it in university. A sample of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix 6a, and the results of the questionnaire are presented Appendix 6b. Results show that only 2 (6 %) of the 33 students had taken English Literature as a subject in their secondary school (one of them took it as a subject in the Hong Kong Certificate Examination (HKCEE, Form 5), and the other took it in both the HKCEE as well as the HKALE (Hong

Kong Advanced Level Examination, Form Upper 6, for university entrance). As for the kinds of difficulties they have encountered, the results were content-analyzed, and the following needs have been identified:

a) Language barrier: students noted that as English is not their native tongue, their inadequate mastery of the language is a major hindrance to their understanding and appreciation of English literature. Some said that they have to spend a great deal of time and energy on trying to understand the literal, let alone the implied meaning of words and sentences in the works they study. Having constantly to consult the dictionary when reading literary works could be an exhausting and frustrating experience.

b) Unfamiliarity with the background of English literature: this is a cultural rather than a linguistic problem. Students said that they are not able to fully comprehend certain literary works because they do not know enough about the cultural and historical backgrounds against which the works were written.

c) Lack of a panoramic view of literature: some students said that they lack a comprehensive view of the history of English literature. That they do not know how an isolated literary work is related to the larger picture of literary history apparently gives rise to some kind of insecurity.

d) Failure to appreciate English literature: students said that even though they may have understood the meaning of every single word in a piece of literary work, say, a short story, and have understood the plot, analyzed the characters, discovered the symbols..., yet all these could very well be just a part of a cut and dried academic exercise, and not true appreciation. A student expressed this sense of frustration in this way: "What troubles me most when studying English literature is that I can't see the point. These literary works are indeed valuable, but I don't understand for what they can be

called masterpieces."

e) Unfamiliarity with methods of literary study: some students pointed out that they find enormous difference between the way one studies Chinese literature and the way one approaches English literature. A great deal of adjustment has to be made and it is not easy. Others said while it is truly an enjoyable and fascinating experience to see how their teachers "open up" the world of a literary work in their lectures, they (the students themselves) are at a loss when required to approach a piece of work on their own. They do not have the "keys" that could "open the door" of the work. Still others remarked that although they might recognize a number of literary terms, they--the terms--remain no more than definitions. Students said they do not know how these terms could be applied to the analysis of literary works.

f) Lack of sensitivity to English literary works: this area of difficulty is perhaps best explained by quoting the students themselves. One student wrote: "...most of the time, we read and analyzed some literary works, but are seldom impressed by them...." Another student remarked, "I can't 'feel' English literature. If I read Chinese literature, I would be easily moved and then comprehend, there would be an echo in my mind. But I am not able to do so when studying English literature." A third student reported, "I realize that I am in lack of imagination and life experience. These lacks affect my ability to 'feel'...literature."

g) Lack of knowledge in how to write a good literature paper: students expressed the need to be taught how to organize and write a literature paper.

It seems to me that students' perceptions of their needs match most of the theoretical assumptions that I have discussed in the last five chapters. For

example, students expressed the need to be introduced to ways by which they could approach a literary work on their own; in chapter 3, I discussed literary theory and the possibilities of turning some of the concepts into methods with which students could apply to the study of literary works. Another area of inadequacy students saw themselves as having is the need to be taught how to write an organized (literature) essay; in Chapter 4, I have discussed various approaches to the teaching of writing, and specifically, writing about literature, and have come up with a writing course which is taught in the first half of the EAS course. Another two obstacles students felt they have to surmount are language barriers and unfamiliarity with the background of English literature; in Chapter 5, when I discussed criteria for the selection of literary materials for the module, I have taken into consideration these needs. I have suggested using literary texts that are not too difficult to understand; and using localized literature which would stimulate students, who have had little contact with English literature in the past, to become interested in this new area of academic pursuit.

There are three other areas of difficulty students have mentioned in the questionnaire: a lack of panoramic view of English literature; failure to appreciate English literature; lack of sensitivity to (English) literature. For the first area of need, I have argued in 2.3, when discussing different types of literature syllabus, that it would be ideal for the English Department to offer two introductory courses to first-year students, one organized according to the generic approach, in which students study several pieces of work (from different genres) in depth; and another according to the chronological approach, where students are given a bird's eye view of "masterpieces." As regards "failure to appreciate" and "lack of sensitivity," I suppose the only solution is continual exposure to English literature, and extensive reading on the part of the students themselves. These areas of difficulties cannot be dealt

with within the limits of the module I propose here.

### Step 2: Formulation of Objectives

Based on the needs described above, objectives for this module are established, as follows:

a) To stimulate students' interest in the study of English literature.

This is done by taking into consideration the educational background, the linguistic ability, and the personal and academic interests of the students who are taking the module, and then select instructional materials that are suitable for them (see Chapter 5).

b) To enable students to learn how to read English literature.

This goal is achieved by introducing students to ways by which they could approach literature; these "approaches" are based on literary theory that belongs to the "text-based" tradition (see Chapter 3).

c) To enable students to learn how to write an organized literature essay.

This objective is attained through familiarizing students with the "writing concepts" and ways of organizing a literature essay (see Chapter 4).

### Step 3: Selection of Content

Four stories by a contemporary Chinese American writer, Maxine Hong Kingston, are chosen as instructional materials (see 5.5). These stories, taken from Kingston's two novels *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, are: "No Name Woman" and "White Tigers" from the first novel; and "The Father from China," and "The American Father" from the second book. To enable students to "open up" the "world" of the stories, some of the theories and pedagogical principles of six literary theorists and theorists of literature-teaching discussed in 3.4.3 are introduced, and they (the students) are encouraged to examine Kingston's stories in the light of the concepts in these theories. These theories include concepts from Propp's *Morphology of the FolkTale*, which are related



to the structure of Russian folktales; certain concepts from Todorov's *The Poetics of Prose*, which deal with aspects of narratives; concepts from Brooks, Purser and Warren's *An Approach to Literature*, which exemplify how "unity" between characterization, plot, and theme can be achieved in a well-written story; and the concept of "starring" as delineated by Barthes in his *S/Z*, which helps readers to uncover the underlying texture of a written text.

#### Step 4: Organization of Content

The module is composed of four units: three hours are devoted to the teaching of each unit. In the the first unit, students learn about several of Todorov's concepts in his *The Poetics of Prose*, and are encouraged to read Kingston's "No Name Woman" in the light of these concepts. In the second unit, they are introduced to Propp's *Morphology of the FolkTale*, and will discuss the concept of "genre" in "White Tigers." In the third unit, students study the concepts in Brooks, Purser, and Warren's *An Approach to Literature*, and will apply them to the study of "The Father from China." In the last unit, students are introduced to the concept of "starring" and will attempt to "star" a few extracts in "The American Father." Although each story is chosen to exemplify certain concepts in a theory, or a set of theories, there is no implication on my part that such matching is mathematically precise. In the actual teaching process--in teaching each of the stories, there will be overlaps, and there will be references to the other stories as well as the other theories. For example, while discussing Brooks, Purser and Warren's distinction between "action" and "plot," references will be made to the Russian Formalists' delineation of "sjuzet" and "fabula." Or, while teaching the idea of "genre" through Propp's *Morphology of the FolkTale*, Todorov's ideas about different types of detective stories will come naturally into the discussion.

Except for the concepts in *An Approach to Literature*, the other theories are

not pedagogical in nature, and will probably appear to be foreign and difficult for Chinese students, especially those who are studying English literature for the first time. In my presentation of the instructional materials in 6.2.1, I will discuss these difficulties, and some of the possible ways of overcoming them, in order to render the theories understandable, relevant, and useful to students.

#### Step 5: Selection of Learning Experiences

The objectives stated in Step 2 are attained through learning experiences that will provide students with opportunities to read, and to write about the four stories. These activities include, first, the reading and discussion of the four stories; second, introduction to certain concepts within some literary theory, and encouraging students to read the stories in the light of these concepts; and third, the provision of written assignments to reinforce students' understanding of the concepts. These activities are described in greater detail in 6.2.1.

#### Step 6: Organization of Learning Experiences

- a) Class Meetings: the class meets every week for two hours, during which the literary theories, the stories, and ways of organizing a literature essay are discussed. Time is also set aside for writing conferences.
- b) Class Format: each of the four units is divided into three parts. The three-part structure follows the stages in a writing process. The reasons for using the "process" approach to the teaching of writing has been discussed in 4.2.3 and 4.3.

#### Stage 1

##### Before Class Discussion

Before the discussion of each of the short stories, students are asked to read

it at home (a glossary of difficult words is provided to aid students' reading).

### Introduction to Literary Theory

During class, students are introduced to the theories and are then encouraged to read the short stories in the light of the concepts in these theories.

### Stage 2

#### Brainstorming

After the story has been discussed, students are asked to write a short essay, on a theme set by the teacher (see 6.2.1). The teacher discusses with students possible ways of organizing the essay, and reviews the writing concepts that have been taught during the first term in the EAS course (see 4.3). The purpose of the assignment is to provide students with the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned in the unit.

After the students have received the assignment, they are given some time to engage in a brainstorming session during which they share ideas and talk about what they think should go into the essay. The advantage of such kind of group work, as has been discussed in 4.2.3, are: first, it provides students with mutual support and a chance to share and debate ideas that are brainstormed; second, it encourages active learning (instead of listening to the teacher all the time), as well as independent learning (instead of copying down what the teacher has to say); and third, it encourages students to read the text carefully in order to provide evidence to support their points of view.

This kind of classroom activity, however, also has its disadvantages. At least two of them should be mentioned: first, there might be students who prefer to work alone and not share their ideas with others, for all kinds of reasons--for example, they are by nature quiet and do not feel comfortable about

participating in a discussion; they have very good ideas they prefer to keep to themselves; they have little to say and feel embarrassed about not contributing; they need more time (than others) and possibly a quiet environment in which to think before they can come up with ideas. A second, and very serious disadvantage, as has been discussed in 4.2.3, is that students will not be able to enjoy this kind of collaboration in an examination setting, and examinations are a very important means by which students are assessed in HKU.

The first problem can be solved by allowing those students who prefer to work alone to do so. The second problem can be tackled by setting time aside at the end of the course for the practice of analyzing examination questions as well as answering them. The process approach is still valuable for the reasons provided above. Besides, this approach can also be used when students write their essays during term time.

### Starting to Write

After the brainstorming session, students start writing the essay outside class on their own. They are asked to follow a writing procedure that goes from outlining, drafting, revising, editing, to typing up the final version of the essay. Again, such a procedure has its problems. Reid (1984)--see 4.3.2--describes two types of writers: the "radical brainstormer," who likes to write spontaneously and does not like to follow any kind of procedure; and the "radical outliner," who works through a piece of writing in a systematic fashion. The method I propose here will appeal to the latter type but not the former. My purpose here is not to force students to follow one way of writing, but to provide them with a possible model. They should feel free to follow it or to abandon it later, but they are encouraged to at least try to use it in this course.

### Peer-conferencing

One week later, students bring a full draft of the essay to class. They are put into small groups for peer-conferencing. Members of the group are asked to a) proofread each other's essays (for grammatical errors and typing mistakes); b) suggest alternative ways of organizing or presenting the ideas; and c) give advice on how the content can be improved.

The merits and problems associated with peer conferencing are similar to those with brainstorming, as have been discussed above. Additional advantages and problems include: students may feel more secure as their work has been looked at by fellow students before handing it in to the teacher; but: fellow students might mis-correct correct "mistakes," or mis-amend a correct "mis-concept." Despite its drawbacks, this is still a precious opportunity for students to learn from one another; besides, any "wrong" advice that might be given by fellow students would be counter-corrected in the next stage.

### Stage 3

#### Writing Conferences

Students re-write their draft according to the suggestions and comments made by their peers (or not re-write at all), and turn in a final version of the essay to the teacher. Essays are then marked and returned to students. At the same time, the teacher makes arrangements to see his students in writing conferences. These conferences serve two purposes: a) to allow students to go through their essay with the teacher, in order to discuss the content and style, as well as any other problems in their writing; b) to give students an opportunity to talk about their feelings for the course--what they like or dislike about it; to tell the teacher what they would like to do more/less. After the conferences, students are asked to re-write their essay.

## Step 7: Evaluation

The final step aims at finding out to what extent students have achieved the objectives stated in Step 2, as well as their reactions to the way the course is presented. Evaluation is done by asking students to fill in a questionnaire at the end of the term. How evaluation of the module was carried out in 1996 is described in a small-scale study in 6.3. The questionnaire used for that evaluation exercise can be found in Appendix 6c.

### **6.2.1. The Instructional Materials**

The module consists of four units, each of which is based on one story by Maxine Hong Kingston: the first on "No Name Woman," the second on "White Tigers," the third on "The Father from China," and the fourth on "The American Father" (See 5.5). Each unit will be described under the following headings: "Purpose(s)"; "Exercises"; "Written Assignment"; and "Discussion," where problems and issues that may be encountered while teaching these stories are raised and discussed.

#### **Unit 1: "No Name Woman"**

##### Purposes

- a) To examine the structure of "No Name Woman."
- b) To achieve a) by studying the story in the light of five of the principles in Todorov's *The Poetics of Prose*.

Five of Todorov's principles are introduced to students; they are:

- The distinction between "sjuzet" and "fabula"
- The distinction between "Enonce" and "Enonciation"
- "Figuration"
- The Grammar of Narrative: Structure in Narrative
- The Grammar of Narrative: Genre

## Exercises

1. Considering the distinction between "sjuzet" and "fabula"

### Tasks

a) Identify the "sjuzet" in the story. Summarize each "event" in the story in a sentence. For example:

- Present: Mother tells Daughter the story of the "Drown-in-the-Well" Aunt.
- Past: Mother's narration of the "mass" wedding before the men "go out on the road." Mother notices that the Aunt is pregnant. Mother tells the story of the villagers' raid of the house.

...

b) Identify the "fabula" in the story. Combine Mother's story with Daughter's speculations and try to come up with the "real" sequence of events. For example:

#### Past

- i. The "mass" wedding
- ii. The men "go out on the road"
- iii. The Aunt meets the villain
- iv. ...

#### Present

- i. Mother tells Daughter the story of the "Drown-in-the-Well" Aunt
- ii. ....

2. Considering the distinction between "Enonce" and "Enonciation"

### Task

Identify the two voices (Mother's and Daughter's) in the story. For example:

Para.	Voice
1	Mother

...

## 3. Considering the concept of "Figuration"

Tasks

- a) Identify i) the tensions and conflicts between pairs of characters (antithesis); and ii) the similarities between them (parallelism).

For example:

Pairs	Antithesis	Parallelism
Mother-Daughter		
Mother-Aunt		
Mother-Father		
Aunt-Villagers		
Aunt-Villain		

- b) Identify Father, Mother, and Daughter's attitude toward the Aunt.

Can you see any convergence between them (gradation)?

- i. Father's attitude
- ii. Mother's attitude
- iii. Daughter's attitude

## 4. Considering "The Grammar of Narrative": or Structure in Narrative

Task

Identify the different parts in the structure of the narrative. Use one or two sentences to summarize each part:

- i. Equilibrium:
- ii. Disequilibrium:
- iii. Modified equilibrium:
- iv. Complete trajectory:

## 5. Considering The Grammar of Narrative: Genre



### Task

Which genre(s) do you think "No Name Woman" comes closest to (e.g., autobiography, history, fantasy)? Explain.

The concept of "genre" is explored in greater detail in the next unit.

### Written Assignment

"Re-read the portion of the story which is related to the Aunt. Re-write it from her point of view. In doing so, you must make a choice between the Daughter's several speculations: choose one of them, or refute all of them, and come up with your own. Whatever you choose, you must justify your choice. Write this in the form of a letter the Aunt scribbles, addressed to her husband, Ah Choi, before she commits suicide in the well."

### Discussion

How well these exercises actually worked when it was taught to two groups of EAS students in 1996 will be discussed in 6.3. One question, however, that must be addressed at this stage is: is it necessary to make explicit the literary theories behind these exercises? Is it necessary to introduce students to technical terms such as "sjuzet" and "fabula," which might appear to be foreign and difficult to students? I believe teaching literary theory in such an explicit manner is justified for at least two reasons. First, granted that these concepts are explained clearly, they will not appear to be difficult for our students. Second, given the low status of the EAS course, as has been explained in 1.3.1 and 5.2.2, explicit and direct mention of the names of the theorists as well as technical terms will enhance students' motivation to study these theories and to take the module seriously.

## **Unit 2: "White Tigers"**

### Purposes

- a) To provide students with the opportunity to think more deeply about the concept of "genre," and to identify the underlying structure of "White Tigers."
- b) To enable students to do so through the discussion of some of the principles delineated in Propp's *Morphology of the FolkTale*.

### Exercises

#### 1. Thinking about the concept of "genre"

##### Task

Read the three short narratives that have been given to you. Decide which one is a folk tale, a fairy tale, or a detective story. Discuss in small groups what you think constitute a folk tale, a fairy tale, and a detective story. Why are you able to label each of these narratives as such? What characteristics (elements) make each of these narratives unique, different from each other? Make a list of the characteristics (elements).

#### 2. Introduction to Propp's *Morphology of the FolkTale*

##### Task

Read "Swangeese," a Russian Folktale, and try to identify in the story the "Initial situation," the 31 "functions," and the seven "spheres" as explained by Propp. How many of these elements can you find? How does identifying these elements help you understand the structure of the story? the genre of a (Russian) folktale?

#### 3. Reading Maxine Hong Kingston's "White Tigers"

##### Task

What genre do you think the story comes closest to: autobiography, fantasy, folktale, or a "wuxia" (swordsman) story? Why? Using Propp's scheme as a model, can you identify some of the elements that run through

the narrative?

Do these elements have to appear in a certain order? Think of other narratives of the same genre that you have read. Can you find similar elements in them?

Do the "elements" appear in the same order? Why or why not?

### Written Assignment

"Which 'genre' do you think 'White Tigers' most resemble? Why? Justify your answer. What are some of the dominant elements in this genre? Are these elements also found in other narratives? Do the elements have to appear in a certain order? Why? Why has Kingston chosen this genre to bring out her message? Could the story have been told, with the same effectiveness, in a different genre? What conclusions can you make about the relationship between content (message) and form (genre)?"

### Discussion

Although Propp's principles can be applied to a large quantity of Russian folktales, it is likely they cannot be applied equally to folktales of other countries, not to say stories belonging to other genres. The purpose of the exercise, therefore, is not so much to study Propp's work per se, but to raise students' awareness of the concept of "genre" and the structure of stories through Propp's work. Once students have been introduced to the concept of genre, they are asked to apply it to other narratives, in this case to Kingston's "White Tigers."

The heroine in "White Tigers," Fa Mu Lan, is a widely known folk heroine (see 5.5.1) who disguises as a man in order to enlist in the army on behalf of his father who is old and has no sons. The intention of the original narrative, in the form of a poem, is to teach the importance of filial piety; but Kingston has borrowed the story to paint the portrait of a swordswoman who stands up for

herself, who asserts her female identity, who refuses to be suppressed by her male counterparts, who does not succumb to the constraints imposed on her by the customs, laws, traditions, etc., within a Chinese social milieu--in short, Fa Mu Lan is the very opposite of the "No Name Woman," the "Drown-in-the Well Aunt."

I believe students would recognize the figure of Fa Mu Lan right away, but will also discover very soon that the heroine is, in several ways, different from the one in the original poem: 1) Kingston has re-written the story in the form of a "wuxia" novel--a genre students are very familiar with; 2) she has adopted a rather comic tone (the tone in the original poem is very serious); 3) she has made use of the story to serve a different purpose--see previous paragraph.

Besides providing students with the opportunity to think about the concept of "genre," which is the main purpose of this exercise, it further challenges them to consider why Kingston has chosen this genre to bring out her message. The message, to take the risk of over-simplifying it, is: it is possible for a woman to accomplish what she wants to accomplish in life, despite her gender and the many social and cultural constraints she is bound by.

### **Unit 3: "The Father from China"**

#### Purpose

To introduce students to the "elements" of fiction--plot, characterization, and theme--as explained by Brooks, Purser, and Warren in *An Approach to Literature*.

#### Exercises

##### 1. Understanding Plot

Since "The Father from China" is a long story, it is divided into smaller units for

teaching purposes. The story can be read on two levels: first, it can be regarded as one story; and second, it can be seen as a series of sub-stories.

Level 1: "The Father from China" as one long story

The story can be divided into the Beginning, the Middle, and the End:

The Beginning: The Daughter talks to the Father and tells him how she feels about him. At the end of this part, the Daughter says:

"I'll tell you what I suppose from your silences and few words, and you can tell me that I'm mistaken. You'll just have to speak up with the real stories if I've got you wrong" (18).

The Middle: The Daughter tells the stories of the Father: from his birth to his wife's arrival in New York.

The End: The Father and the Mother move from New York to San Francisco.

Level 2: "The Father from China" as a series of sub-stories. The "Middle" section of the story contains nine sub-stories; they are:

Sub-story 1: The Father as a baby

Sub-story 2: The Father as a child and as a young man

Sub-story 3: The Father's marriage

Sub-story 4: The Father as a village teacher

Sub-story 5: The Father's plan to go to America

Sub-story 6: The Father's trip to America

Sub-story 7: The Father's first year in America

Sub-story 8: The Father's laundry business

Sub-story 9: The Wife's arrival in America

### Tasks

- a) In small groups, read each of the nine sub-stories. Each group will read a "sub-story" and identify the three parts in a "plot," as explained by Brooks Purser, and Warren, that is, the beginning (exposition), the middle (complication), and the end (resolution).
- b) What principles and criteria did you use to decide what constitute(s) a "beginning," a "middle," and an "end"?

## 2. Understanding Characterization

### Tasks

- a) Read the "sub-story" you have been assigned, and examine the character of the Father through i) the Daughter's description and comments on him; ii) through his actions and dialogues; and iii) what others say about him.
- b) Compare notes after you have completed a), and discuss the development of the Father's character in terms of his personality; his relationship with others (especially his daughter); and his sense of identity (in terms of his feelings about China and America).

## 3. Understanding Theme

### Task

- a) What do you consider to be "the governing idea...the focal idea" (Brooks, Purser, and Warren, 1975:15) in the story?" Write a few sentences to describe this idea.

### Written Assignment

"How do plot, characterization, and theme converge to form an organic unity in 'The Father from China' ? More specifically, how does the Daughter's description of the Father (**characterization**) and the way she tells the story, which determines the structure of the narrative (**plot**), help her to achieve the

purpose she wants to attain (theme)?"

### Discussion

This is the probably the most straight-forward unit among the four units, and I believe students will be able to grasp the concepts as well as do the exercises without much difficulty. At least two reasons contribute to this ease of understanding: first, compared to "No Name Woman," and even to "White Tigers," "The Father from China" is less complicated: it contains one single voice (the Daughter's) and a series of chronologically narrated events; and second, unlike Propp and Todorov, who are literary theorists, Brooks, Purser, and Warren are literature teachers themselves, and have written *An Approach to Literature* as a textbook, aimed at helping students to read literature; hence, the concepts they present are easy to understand and can, without much difficulty, be applied to literary materials, in this case, short stories.

### Unit 4: "The American Father"

In Unit 3, students are asked to examine the plot, characterization, and theme(s) of a story. In this unit, students are introduced to Barthes' five codes, and to learn to act as "textual workers." The codes are presented to students in a "simplified" form, following Culler's (1975) explanation. This is how he explains them: "The *proairetic code* governs the reader's construction of plot. The *hermeneutic code* involves a logic of question and answer, enigma and solution, suspense and peripeteia...The *semic code* provides models of which enable the reader to collect semantic features that relate to persons or to develop characters, and the *symbolic code* guides extrapolation from text to symbolic and thematic readings...Finally there is what Barthes calls the *referential code*, constituted by the cultural background to which the text refers" (p.203).

## Exercise

### 1. Understanding the five codes

After the teacher has explained the codes, the students are shown how the codes could be applied to the study of an extract from a story. I borrow Stevens and Stewart's (1992:37-38) exercise, which is based on Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily." The part of the story Stevens and Stewart use relates to an incident in the story where the protagonist, Emily, is buying poison, which is used to kill her lover, for he has planned to desert her:

"I want some poison, she said to the druggist. She was over thirty then, still a slight woman, through thinner than usual, with cold, haughty black eyes in a face the flesh of which was strained across the temples and about the eye sockets as you imagine a lighthouse-keeper's face to look. "I want some poison," she said.

"Yes, Miss Emily. What kind? For rats and such? I'd recom-"

"I want the best you have. I don't care what kind."

This extract could be used to demonstrate how the five codes operate. For example, much of the passage works on the proairetic level, for it gives signs about the plot. At the end of the story, the townspeople find the bones of Miss Emily's lover in her bedroom. Miss Emily's buying of poison here leads to that scene. Nevertheless, because the reader is not told about the death of the lover until the final scene, the passage also operates on the hermeneutic level. Why Emily buys the poison, and why she wants the best--these questions could only be answered when the reader reaches the end of the story. The statement about Emily's age and appearance are certainly part of the semic code. The reference to her "being over thirty" is part of the referential code, for there are cultural stereotypes about unmarried middle-aged women in that society (in a conservative small town in the



American south in the late 19th century). If one of the themes of the story is to show how some people of that society cling to the past, which they consider to be more dignified and rich, then the extract here also operates on the symbolic level. Emily does not want to let her lover go, but as she is unable to prevent him from leaving, she "keeps" him by killing him and "preserving" him in her house.

### Task

- a) In small groups, try to discover the five codes in an extract taken from "The American Father." The passage begins from "In 1903 my father was born in San Francisco" to "This is a father place; a father belongs here" (p.231).

### Written Assignment

"How does starring the text help you to better understand the structure of this section of the story? and how does this understanding contribute to your reading of the rest of the story?"

### Discussion

In the above section, I have discussed what I expect students will find to be easy or difficult when they do the exercises, and have also tried to curtail the anticipated difficulties by providing more explicit explanations, designing smaller exercises that lead up to the main task, and by re-casting the language and the concepts presented by the literary theorists in terms that I believe are comprehensible to students.

To what extent the exercises prove to be useful, relevant, and interesting to the students was explored in a small-scale study. The four units were taught to 33 first-year students in the Faculty of Arts who were taking ILSE and EAS during the first term of the 1996-1997 academic year. The study is described and

discussed in the next section of this chapter.

### 6.3. A Small Scale Study

It is necessary to make three points at the beginning of this section. First, as I have explained in the "Introduction" (under "Definition of Scope"), this thesis is essentially a theoretical investigation into the need to introduce content (literature)-based language courses into the English language curriculum in HKU in the late 1990s, and the means to do so. The empirical data presented in this part are included only to demonstrate how the needs of students were identified, and how the course ("Reading and Writing about Literature") was evaluated.

Second, the empirical data are an integral part of this chapter (as well as this thesis) for this reason: whereas Steps 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 in the Tyler-Taba model, (see 2.4 as well as 6.2) which I followed in the design of the syllabus, can be delineated on a theoretical level, it seems that Step 1 and Step 7, namely, "Diagnosis of Needs" and "Evaluation" could be discussed (more easily and more convincingly) if specific data are provided. The reason why this is so is because whereas Steps 2 to 6 could be taken by the designer/s himself/themselves, Steps 1 (partly) and 7 (largely) are dependent on students' input before they could be completed--and hence the justification for the small-scale study. What is discussed below then, is part of Step 7.

Third, a brief description of when and how the study was conducted would be appropriate here. As I have explained in the "Introduction," and again at the beginning of this chapter, the design of the course is such that the year-long EAS course is divided into two parts: in the first term, the focus will be on teaching students how to write an academic essay; in the second term, the "Reading and Writing about Literature" module will be taught. But due to

special circumstances this year (1996-1997), I made the decision to undertake the small-scale study in the second half of the first semester in 1996. As Hong Kong is to revert to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997, and as my research, so to speak, is a "prediction study," about my "forecast" of what will happen in the post-colonial period in Hong Kong, it is appropriate that this study be finished before the political change-over.

In order to meet this deadline, certain adjustments were made to the schedule. Basically, the teaching procedure described in 6.2 (under "Organization of Learning Experiences") were followed, but a few minor modifications were introduced: first, students in the study were asked do extra work outside class; second, instead of the originally intended three hours per story, two hours were spent on teaching each of the stories; third, as "The Father from China" is particularly long, the students were asked to read different sub-stories and a "jig-saw" reading exercise was conducted in class; and fourth, instead of asking all the students to write all four essays, eight or nine of them were assigned to write on one topic.

#### **6.3.1. Purpose of Study**

The general objective of the study is two-fold: 1) to identify what kinds of difficulties students have when they read and write about English literature (Needs Analysis); and 2) to evaluate a course called "Reading and Writing about Literature" (Evaluation). The more specific purposes of the study are explained in 6.3.3.

#### **6.3.2. Methodology**

In order to fulfill the two purposes, two questionnaires were designed. There are, of course, many different means by which the needs of students could be

identified, and by which the course could be evaluated. Among them, the questionnaire is chosen for one important reason: it has been emphasized throughout the thesis that, as I design this new curriculum, I have in mind a specific context (that is, HKU), and have, therefore, to take into consideration the socio-cultural context within which the curriculum is designed, as well as the various constraints the context imposes upon the curriculum. In the same spirit, I have chosen questionnaire survey as a means to identify needs and to evaluate the course because the questionnaire is the major instrument used in the English Centre (and throughout the University) to achieve these two purposes. Naturally, if a similar syllabus is to be used elsewhere, other instruments could be used for the identification of needs as well as for evaluation.

#### Constructing, Administering, and Analyzing the Results of a Questionnaire

There are certain steps that a researcher follows when he constructs a questionnaire. Educational researchers (e.g., Tuckman, 1978; Borg and Gall, 1979; Guy, Edgley, Arafat, and Allen, 1987; Moser and Kalton, 1989; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990; Bell, 1993; McMillan and Schumacher, 1993) have suggested the following:

1. Deciding on the kind of survey that is to be conducted
2. Selecting a sample
3. Setting objectives
4. Formulating questionnaire items
5. Designing the layout of the questionnaire
6. Piloting

After the piloting, the questionnaire is revised, and then administered to the sample which has been identified. Finally, the results are coded, tabulated, and then analyzed. I will briefly discuss these steps in the light of the investigation I plan to conduct.

### 1. Deciding on the kinds of survey that is to be conducted

Two major kinds of survey have been identified by researchers (e.g., Borg and Gall 1979; Sanders and Pinhey, 1983; Guy et al, 1987; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990): the cross-sectional survey, and the longitudinal survey. Since I am interested in identifying the needs students have in the study of English literature, as well as in evaluating a course which is offered for the first time (in order to improve it), the surveys I need to conduct are cross-sectional surveys. The first survey was carried out in the middle of the first semester in the year-long EAS course, and the second at the end of the same term.

### 2. Setting objectives

Before individual questions in a questionnaire could be formulated, the researcher must be clear about the purposes of his research (Guy et al, 1987; Moser and Kalton, 1989; Nunan, 1992; Singleton, Straits, and Straits, 1993; Cohen and Manion, 1994). Cohen and Manion (1994:85) specify three stages in the formulation of objectives for a questionnaire. First, the study's general purpose should be stated and re-written into a specific aim. Second, based on this central objective, subsidiary topics that are related to this aim are identified, and they are expressed in individual items in the questionnaire. Third, individual questions are being formulated in order to elicit response to the specific issues identified in Step 2. The general purposes of the two surveys I conducted have already been described above, in 6.3.1, and the more specific aims will be explained in 6.3.3.

### 3. Selecting a sample

The two key terms in this step are "total target population" and "sample" (Cates, 1985; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990; Singleton et al, 1993). The "total target population" in my study are all first-year students in the Arts Faculty in

HKU who are taking ILSE, and who are also taking EAS. As for the sample, it consists of 33 EAS students whom I taught during the first semester of the 1996-1997 academic year.

#### 4. Formulating items in a questionnaire

Types of items to be used, the ways they should be presented and ordered have been widely discussed by researchers (e.g., Sanders and Pinhey, 1983; Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990; Hessler, 1992; McMillan and Schumacher, 1993; Singleton et al, 1993). Questionnaire items can be presented in the form of a question or a statement to which responses could be made in different ways. These questions or statements could be "open" or "closed." Another type of items are scaled items. Scales are particularly useful for finding out about attitudes, beliefs, and opinions (Hopkins, 1980:57). As I was interested in identifying needs and finding out students' response to a course, and not measuring attitudes, the first type seems more appropriate.

#### 5. Designing the questionnaire

Having written the instructions, as well as the individual items, the next step is to decide how to present them in the questionnaire. The appearance and layout of the questionnaire are important for they would affect the way a respondent responds to a questionnaire (Bell, 1993; Cohen and Manion, 1994).

#### 6. Piloting

Researchers suggest that piloting (or pre-testing) the questionnaire before administering it is a necessary and essential step in the construction of a questionnaire (Tuckman, 1979; Munn and Drever, 1990; McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). In my case, piloting was done with several of my colleagues in the English Centre, who are familiar with the EAS course as well

as with the kind of students who are enrolled this course. The questionnaire was re-written based on their comments and suggestions.

#### 7. Administering the questionnaire

Fraenkel and Wallen (1990:336-336) describe four ways by which data could be collected through a questionnaire survey: by directly administering it to a group, by mail, by telephone, and through face-to face interviews. In the context in which this study was done, direct administration is the most appropriate way to conduct the two surveys.

#### 8. Analyzing data

Depending on the scale of the survey, the method used for collecting data, as well as the kinds of analysis that are intended, different procedures will be used (Sanders and Pinhey, 1983; Guy et al, 1987; Hessler, 1992; Bell, 1993). Since my study involved a very small sample of subjects, and was intended to show how the needs of students were identified, as well as how the module was evaluated, what I had done was to simply tabulate the responses to the closed questions; content-analyze the responses to the open questions; identify patterns that have emerged in the analysis of the results; as well as draw conclusions based on the data that had been collected.

#### 6.3.3. The two questionnaires

As I have explained above, two questionnaires were designed for this study. The general objective of the first questionnaire is to identify the needs students have in the study of English literature. The specific purposes of this questionnaire are:

a) To find out how much background the students in two EAS groups have in English literature before they entered university (in order to determine how much needs to be taught in the module "Reading and Writing about Literature")

and,

b) to identify the difficulties these students have when they read and write about English literature in university.

Accordingly, there are two major items in this questionnaire: The first item matches Purpose a) and the second Purpose b):

Item 1: "Did you take English Literature as a subject in your HKCEE?"

Yes

No

"Did you take English Literature as a subject in your HKALE?"

Yes

No

Item 2: "In the following space, write down, in a paragraph or so, some of the difficulties you have encountered when you study English literature."

A sample of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix 6a.

As for the second questionnaire (see Appendix 6c), its general objective is to evaluate the module, and it has five specific purposes. They are:

a) To find out if students have found **reading** the four stories by Maxine Hong Kingston to be interesting;

b) To find out if students have found **discussing** the four stories by Maxine Hong Kingston to be interesting;

(These two questions look very similar: but I have set them for a deliberate purpose: I would like to know if students feel differently about reading the stories--on their own; and discussing it--with the guidance of the teacher as well as the presence of fellow classmates.)

c) To find out if students have found the approaches to the study of narratives to be useful in helping them to understand and appreciate the four stories;

d) To find out if students think they will be able to apply the approaches to the analysis of other stories they will read on their own later;

e) To find out if the teaching of writing skills are useful in helping them to write



literature papers.

To meet these objectives, there are two parts in the questionnaire, which consists of five "close-ended" questions, and one "open-ended" item in order to "catch" responses that cannot be elicited from the "closed" questions. Part I asks students to respond to the following questions by circling the appropriate number, indicating the extent to which they agree with the statement.

1. I have found **reading** Maxine Hong Kingston's stories to be interesting:

1                      2                      3                      4

(Students were asked to respond to the reading of **each** of the stories separately.)

2. I have found **discussing** Maxine Hong Kingston's stories to be interesting:

1                      2                      3                      4

(Again, students were asked to respond to the discussion of **each** of the stories separately.)

3. I have found **the approaches to studying narratives** useful in helping me to read Kingston's stories:

1                      2                      3                      4

(Students were asked to respond to **each** of the four approaches separately.)

4. I think I will be able to use these approaches to analyze other stories on my own:

1                      2                      3                      4

5. I think the writing skills taught in the module will enable me to write a literature essay:

1                      2                      3                      4

Part II asks students to answer an open-ended question: "Please feel free to comment on any aspect of the module. For example, the selection of stories;

the 'critical approaches' (which are based on literary theory); the ways tutorials are organized and conducted; the workload, etc. Or anything else you would like to say regarding the module."

A sample of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix 6c.

#### **6.3.4. Subjects and Procedure**

The subjects in this small-scale study were 33 first-year students who took the EAS course during the 1996-1997 academic year. They belonged to two different EAS groups, and included 27 female and 6 male students. During the fourth week of the first term, students were asked to write a short paragraph describing the difficulties and problems they have encountered when they read English literature. At the end of the term, they were asked to fill in a questionnaire which aims at evaluating the module.

#### **6.3.5. Results and Discussion**

Results obtained from the first questionnaire have already been presented and discussed in 6.2, under "Diagnosis of Needs." Feedback gathered from the second questionnaire, which seeks to elicit students' responses to the module, were analyzed in the following way: those gathered from the closed questions (Questions 1 to 5) were tabulated and presented in percentages; those obtained from the open-ended section were content-analyzed. (The results can be found in Appendix 6d).

From analyzing the results, a number of observations can be made. I shall discuss these observations in three parts: first, I will look at the results gathered from the closed questions and highlight a few patterns that have emerged from them. Second, I will discuss the results obtained from the open-ended question, according to the content-analysis that has been made.

As I discuss, I will refer back to the first part of Chapter 6, where I presented my own suggestions on how the instructional materials could be used, and my speculations on how students might react to them; I will compare my own speculations with the students' responses. Third, I shall reflect on the limitations of the study and to make recommendations for further research.

#### The Closed questions (Questions 1 to 5)

A few observations could be made about the results:

##### 1. General response

The responses could be considered, in general, to be favorable. For all items, a minimum of 60% to a maximum of 100% of the students thought that the module was effective in helping them to read and write about literature.

##### 2. Responses to the individual questions

Questions 1 and 2: when responses to Question 1 are compared to those in Question 2, it could be seen that the latter received higher ratings than the former. Students found discussing the stories more interesting than reading them. Some of the possible reasons that might have contributed to this phenomenon were given by the students themselves, in the second part of the questionnaire. Some said that when reading the stories before the class meetings, they did not understand the historical/geographical background of the stories, and that this was an obstacle to their ability to "enter" into the world of the literary works; they also found some of the vocabulary Kingston uses to be quite unusual, and the plots of certain stories rather "confusing" --these problems prevented them from following the story-line. But in class meetings, when the background of the stories was given, when certain words were explained, and when "critical approaches" (through the study of literary theory) were introduced, they began to appreciate the stories. A further reason that could explain the phenomenon is: as the students themselves said,

they enjoyed being able to express their views and to interact with others. A point, then, could perhaps be made about the value of teaching literature through discussion (as opposed to listening to lectures only), where students are, on the one hand, led to discover ideas on their own (rather than being lectured at); and on the other hand, be given the opportunities to ask questions, to express their views, as well as to debate with others.

As for the analysis and discussion of students' responses to the individual stories, I will leave this until later, when I discuss students' responses to the open-ended question (Question 6).

Questions 3 and 4: when the results in Questions 1 and 2, which have to do with the stories, and those in Question 3, which has to do with literary theory, are compared, it could be seen that students rated the study of literary theory higher than the stories themselves. This result might be attributed to three reasons: first, compared to the stories, literary theory is something which is completely new to the students, and they were therefore attracted to it. Second, students took the concepts I presented in class seriously because they (the concepts) are related to "big" names, a point I have made in 6.2. Third, they might have felt that the concepts from literary theory provide them with some means by which they could approach other stories on their own. The last conjecture could perhaps be confirmed by the next question, where 74% of the students said they think they would be able to apply these concepts to the study of other stories.

Question 5: 75% of the respondents said they found the writing assignments to be useful, but 10% strongly disagreed with the statement.

The open-ended question (Question 6)

Categories that have emerged after a content-analysis of the results include the following:

1. General impression of the module:

Over half of the students thought that the tutorials, in which the stories were taught, were well-organized, well conducted, interesting, and useful. A small number of them also complimented the teacher on his ability to explain things clearly, and for encouraging them to speak up in class (1).

2. Teaching method:

Some students commented that it was more interesting to learn theoretical concepts through the study of stories; but several of them also expressed that they had difficulty understanding the stories before they were discussed in class. (This helps to explain why, in responding to Questions 1 and 2, students rated discussing the stories higher than reading the stories). They suggested that the methods of approaching the narratives should first be introduced, before the teacher assigns the stories.

I reacted to this suggestion with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I agree with it: introducing students to the "methods" first would help them to enter into the world of the story more quickly, and would therefore facilitate the reading of the story. Indeed, if this method is used, as one student explained, he/she will be more prepared for tutorials and can come armed with ideas and questions. On the other hand, I feel that allowing students to struggle with an unfamiliar text on their own first before explaining it is not necessarily a bad thing; it is, in fact, an important purpose of the module. For example, to try to figure out why Kingston uses well-known Chinese classical myths in "White Tigers" in such an unusual way, is to experience the effect of "defamiliarization" (the Russian Formalists); to read a story such as "White Tigers" and to be reminded of "wuxia" novels forces students to rethink the idea of "genre"

(Propp); to read several of the sub-stories in "The Father from China" and to try to find out the inter-connections between them, how they finally converge to form a unity (The American New Critics) is an interesting challenge. To introduce the "methods" before students read the stories would be to deprive them of, to borrow Barthes's terms, the "plaisir" and "jouissance" of reading.

But perhaps there is a third way, a middle way: students could be given some background information (2), (for example, who Kingston was, where she was born and where she grew up; her mother's background in China; how her father came to the United States); as well as a few clues as to how the story could be approached before asking them to read the story. This would, negatively, safeguard against the danger of students' losing interest in the stories altogether because they could not understand them; and positively, to whet their appetite for more explanation and discussion in tutorials. I think the last approach is a good balance between making students too dependent on the teacher for guidance, and for causing students to lose motivation in their learning because they are not given sufficient guidance.

### 3. The stories:

Although, as shown in the results obtained from the closed questions, students' responses to the stories were generally favorable, the remarks they made in this part of the questionnaire were mostly negative, or suggestive: some thought that the stories were not too interesting or too long; some didn't like the way Kingston writes; some preferred reading less and watching more videos. But it is also important to note that each of these remarks was made by one, at most two individuals; and that some of the remarks were made by the same individuals.

Besides making general comments about the stories, some students

commented on individual stories. I will summarize these remarks, and also try to look at them in the light of those I myself made in 6.2.1 when I presented the instructional materials. First "No Name Woman": among these comments, most of them were about this story. A few students said they liked it; and others felt that it was "confusing" at first, but after certain concepts from Todorov's *The Poetics of Prose* were introduced, and "applied" to the study of the story, they were able to appreciate the story more. One student particularly appreciated the idea of re-writing the story from the perspective of the Aunt, and found that, in doing so, he/she was encouraged to look at the incident from another perspective.

I pointed out in 6.2.1, when I anticipated issues that might come up in the teaching of the story, that some might query the difficulty of literary theory and the need to make explicit the names of the theorists. I argued that as long as the concepts are clearly explained, students would not have difficulty understanding them; and that given the low status of the EAS course, the direct mention of the names of the theorists would increase their motivation to study these theories. Although students did not have much to say about these two points in their response to the open-ended question, their positive feedback to the closed-ended questions could be proof that my conjecture had not been entirely wrong.

Second, "White Tigers": Some students said they liked the story because it is more straight-forward, and that they could follow the plot easily. In 5.5.1, I discussed three responses critics have to the ways Kingston makes use of Chinese myths: sinologists condemn her for not knowing Chinese literature, for distorting the myths to fit her own selfish purposes; Chinese American writers accuse her of sloppy scholarship and for promoting crowd-pleasing exoticization; but some scholars agree with Kingston, who defends herself by

saying that the Chinese myths have to change, they need to be Americanized. I mentioned this controversy when we discussed this story, and asked the students to express their opinions on it. One student, in her response, reported the discussion we had in class; he/she said, "When we discussed 'White Tigers,' the teacher asked us whether we think the idea of modernizing Chinese myths and using them for a different purpose is a good idea. Some of my classmates said it was strange, not good; but some said it was creative and innovative, and some were in between the two. I agree with the second school of thought." I was glad that this student recorded this incident. I was also glad that the issue generated some interesting and heated debate in class.

Third, "The Father from China": As I had anticipated and pointed out in 6.2.1, because this story is relatively straightforward, it did not present too much difficulty for the students.

Lastly, "The American Father": Only one student commented on this story. He/she said that it was quite boring, and this was due perhaps to the length of the story and the fact that he/she did not have enough background information to understand it. This raises the issue of length: compared to "No Name Woman" (a much shorter story), "The American Father," especially the second half of it, is relatively straight-forward; yet, it was less well-liked by students (see responses to Question 1 in the questionnaire). Perhaps length is an important criterion to be taken into consideration when choosing instructional materials. Shortness (of literary works), it seems, could be a important motivating force.

In 6.2.1, while discussing "The American Father" as teaching material, I mentioned the concern that teaching students Barthes's "starring" method



might prove to be difficult; and proposed that before students are asked to "star" Kingston's text, they first do a "warm-up" exercise, where they try to "star" an extract from Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." It seems that the teaching procedure was successful for the rating of the "starring" method was very high (see responses to Question 2 in the questionnaire).

#### 4. Literary theory:

There were a total of 20 remarks in this category, and all of them were positive. Students found the introduction to the literary theory interesting and useful in helping them to understand the stories. Some of the reasons for their positive reactions to these theories have been presented in my discussion of the results of the closed questions.

#### 5. Writing literature essays:

Only a small minority of students wrote about this aspect of the module, but those who did put down positive remarks. The lack of response to this aspect of the module was due perhaps to the fact that they had already filled in a different questionnaire about the teaching of writing concepts for the EAS course.

### Reflections

It could be seen from the results of the questionnaire that students' responses to the module were, overall speaking, favorable, and that they have, in general, found the module to be useful in helping them to read and write about short stories. However, as the evaluative study is only a small portion of this research, the sample involved was rather small, and only one research tool, that is, the questionnaire, was used. In future, to assess the module (or similar modules) more thoroughly, it would be appropriate to use a larger sample as well as multiple research methods: for example, besides the

questionnaire, classroom observation should be made; students could be interviewed during and after the module is taught; and both teacher and students could be encouraged to engage in introspection through keeping a journal, diary, or log book, as well as retrospection (Nunan, 1992). Moreover, another teacher, other than the researcher and the materials writer himself, could be asked to teach the module; he might have different views on how the materials should be presented in class. This way, evaluation of the module would be more complete (White, 1988; Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1992).

#### **6.4. Summary**

This chapter consists of two parts: the first part presents a syllabus of the "Reading and Writing about Literature" module. The module follows the seven steps in the Tyler-Taba model, and consists of four units, each of which is based on a story by Maxine Hong Kingston. Instructional materials are also included. In the second part of the chapter, a small-scale study, which was aimed at evaluating the module, was described. Results of the questionnaire, the major instrument used for assessing the effectiveness of the module, were analyzed and discussed. The chapter ends with reflections on the limitations of the study and suggestions on how a more full-fledged procedure could be adopted if the evaluation is to be carried out on a larger scale; but also re-affirmed that it had never been the intention of this research to conduct such a comprehensive assessment of the module.

## Endnotes to Chapter 6

1. This is perhaps the appropriate place to point out a possible limitation in the small-scale study. As the researcher is also the teacher himself, the students in the study might have responded to the items on the questionnaire slightly more positively (than they would have) because they wanted to please the teacher or because they were afraid of offending him. This possibility cannot be ruled out; but then, the fact that the questionnaire was filled in anonymously should have given the students the security to express their real feelings.
2. To give so-called "background information" seems to contradict the New Critics' idea of the "independence" of the text. I have pointed out in 3.4.3 that although this idea has validity as a concept, to insist that students (especially those who are approaching the literary works being studied as "foreign" literature) be barred from "background information" is not necessary and may obstruct students from appreciating the works.

# **PART IV: EXTENDING A PROPOSED**

## **CURRICULUM**

### **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this thesis has been to argue that, in the light of the socio-political, educational, and language changes in Hong Kong in the 1980s and the 1990s, the "English for Arts Students" (EAS) course in the University of Hong Kong (HKU) needs to be renewed (Chapter 1); and that improvement in the course can be made by strengthening the tie between content and language (Chapter 2). The curriculum that I have proposed consists of two parts: the first part focuses on writing skills (Chapter 4), and the second part on subject-specific modules. My concern in this study has been the "Writing about Literature" module. To build a theoretical basis for this module, I have discussed curriculum theories (Chapter 2), reading and literary theories (Chapter 3), writing theories (Chapter 4), instructional materials (Chapter 5), and have come up with a content-based writing course which introduces students to some text-based literary theories as well as four short stories belonging to the Chinese-American literary tradition. Based on this theoretical foundation, actual instructional materials were produced (see 6.2.1), and were taught to two groups of EAS students during the first term of the 1996-1997 academic year. (See 6.3).

Yet the proposed curriculum, as I have argued throughout the thesis, is not only suitable for first-year Arts students within HKU, but can be extended internally, to other years in the English major's curriculum within the University; and externally, to other academic milieux within Hong kong; in particular, to those in Taiwan and Mainland China; and also those in other Asian

countries; other former British colonies, and other parts of the world.

Before going on to describe the two kinds of extension, it is important to mention here again the distinction I make between "curriculum" and "syllabus" in this thesis (see Definition of Terms" in "Introduction"). "Curriculum" refers to a curricular concept of a content-(literature) based language course which aims at helping students to read English literature as well as to express their response to what they have read in writing. This "curriculum" entails an indefinite number of syllabuses to be used in different contexts and circumstances. The syllabus described in Chapter 6 is only one possible syllabus within this curriculum. The purpose of describing the syllabus is to demonstrate how the principles discussed in Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 can be applied to the construction of a curricular program.

#### Internal Expansion

The curriculum should by no means be restricted to the second half of the English major's first year of studies. It can be extended upwards, to the second and third years in the University. The English Centre could continue to liaise closely with the English Department to offer "Writing-Link" courses similar to those in the University of Washington (see 4.2.6). One possible version of the new curriculum looks like this:

	Existing Features	New Features
First Year	Introduction to English Studies	Writing about Literature: Fiction
Second Year	4-8 papers in English Literature	Writing about Literature: Drama

Third Year	4-8 papers in English Literature	Writing about Literature: Poetry
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### External Expansion

The curriculum also has relevance for other educational settings in the world. Specifically, I have in mind Taiwan and Mainland China. In many of the English departments in the universities in Taiwan, English majors are required to take language and literature courses for three to four years (1). Take National Taiwan University (NTU), the island's oldest and most prestigious university as an example: students are required to take, in their first year, "Introduction to Western Literature," and "Introduction to Literary Studies"; in their second and their third years, "British Literature"; and in their fourth year, "American Literature"; as well as other electives chosen from an array of courses which include "Drama," "Fiction," "Shakespeare," "Introduction to Comparative Literature," etc. (National Taiwan University Bulletin, 1996-1997).

Along with these courses in literature, students are also required to take three years of writing. They are put into groups of 10-12, and each group has a tutor. Each year's writing course is headed by a coordinator, who, together with other instructors, plan the course together. The organizing principle is loosely "generic," that is, each year focuses on a particular mode of writing. For example, first-year students concentrate on writing narrative and descriptive essays, second-year students on persuasive and argumentative papers, etc. (National Taiwan University Bulletin, 1996-1997).

One major problem with this curricular design is that there seems to be little link between the literature classes and the writing classes. My proposed curriculum can easily fit into this setting. When used, the

composition class (as it is called in NTU), besides serving its primary function as a writing course, can be integrated into the literature curriculum: it can ideally be used as complementary and supplementary sessions to the lecture classes, somewhat equivalent to the "discussion sections" in most of the colleges and universities in the U.S.A., or tutorials in British universities. This arrangement can be particularly useful for the second and third year students, whose professors expect them to produce papers which are acceptable to the field of literary studies.

The curriculum described in this thesis, I believe, will also fill a gap in the curricular structure in Mainland China. To explain why, it will be necessary to begin with a brief description of the way English language and literature is taught in the tertiary institutions in China. M. Cheng (1987) explains the situation in the following way: English majors in universities, teacher-training colleges, and foreign language institutes take two sets of courses, language courses and literature courses, throughout the four years. In both of these courses, literary texts are used. The most important language course is "Intensive Reading." The course, which comprises a great deal of literary texts, uses such texts to improve students' five skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and translating. Literary texts, in this case, are used as a means to achieve the purpose of language learning.

As for the courses in the literature strand, the most common ones are "History of English Literature," and "Selected Readings in English Literature" (Dzau, 1990; Ross, 1993). The standard textbook used in "Selected Readings in English Literature" is one with the same name compiled by Chen Jia (1986). It is a series of four volumes. Each lesson in the books consists of the following sections: a brief description of the setting of the work being studied, a summary of the work (when the text is an extract), an interpretation of the

theme, sometimes a few remarks on the artistic features of the work, and then the text itself. The "History of English Literature" course consists of biographical information of authors and historical backgrounds against which literary texts were produced. The approach is essentially socio-historical, or Marxist (see 1.3.4).

My concern here is the course in the literature strand. It seems to me that the course emphasizes the acquisition of reading skills, and knowledge about literature. Little attention is paid to the ways of approaching literature and writing about literary texts. My proposal can complement these existing courses in that it will introduce students to other approaches to literature and ways of expressing and organizing their ideas in essays.

A recent trend in China also adds weight to the kind of curriculum that I have described in this thesis. More and more departments of English in China are shifting their attention to the teaching of linguistics and the more "practical" aspects of English, such as business English, teaching of English as a foreign language, etc. (Dzau, 1990). At the same time, interestingly enough, the Chinese departments have taken the role of teaching both Chinese and Western literature (Ross, 1993). Although students in the Chinese departments are more interested in English (or western) literature (than their counterparts in the English departments), they are less adept at using English to express their ideas (both orally and in writing). A literature-based writing course will, I believe, be useful for these students.

## Summary

In this Conclusion, I have argued that the proposed curriculum will not only meet the needs of first-year students in HKU, it can be extended internally, and upwards, to other years within the University; furthermore, I contend as well,



that it could be argued externally, outwards, to institutions of higher learning in Taiwan and Mainland China. Very possibly, this curricular model can also be used in other former British colonies, in other areas in Asia, and indeed, in other parts of the world.

## Endnote to Conclusion

1. All the universities in Taiwan which have English departments (a total of 16) have to abide by this requirement.

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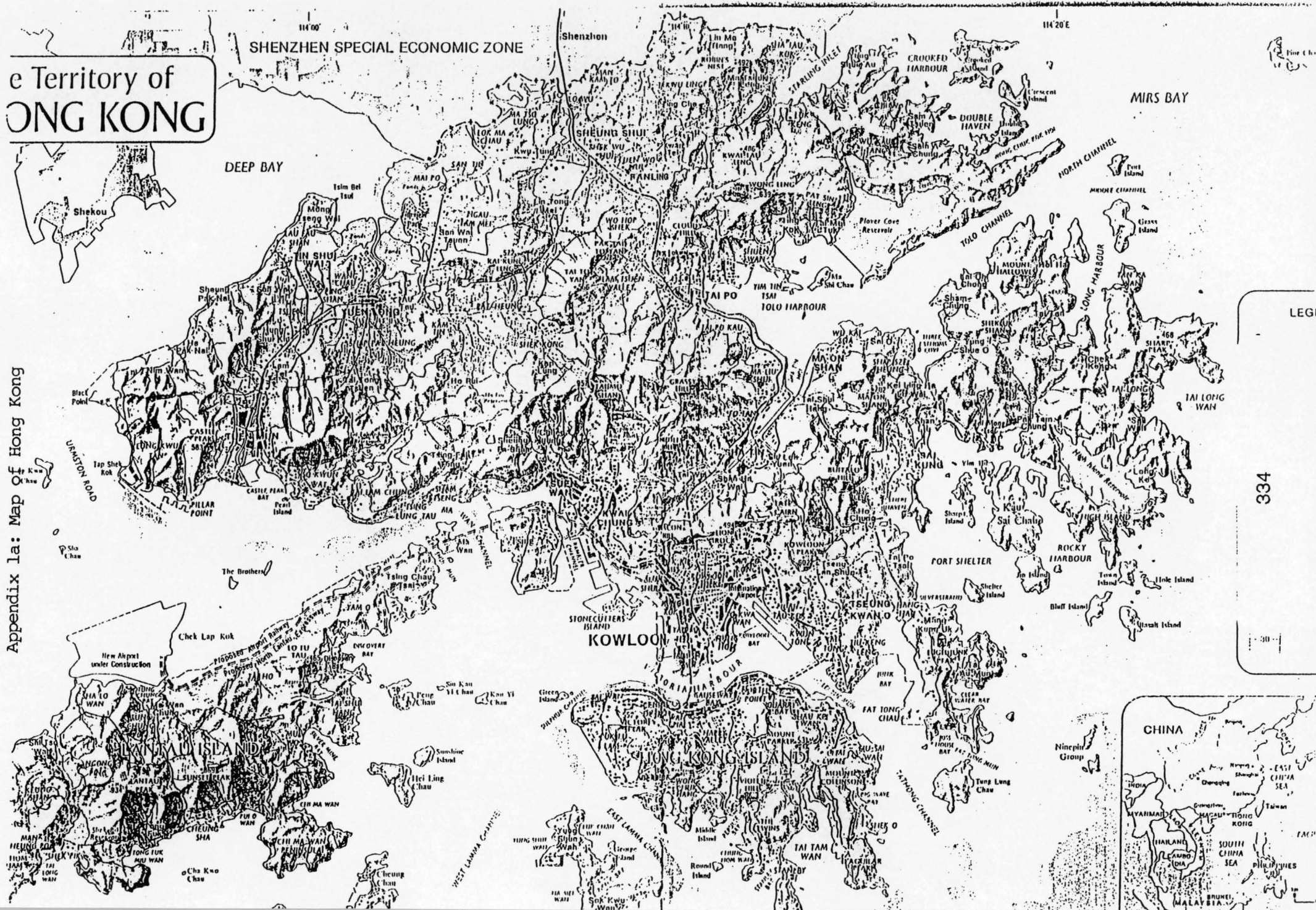
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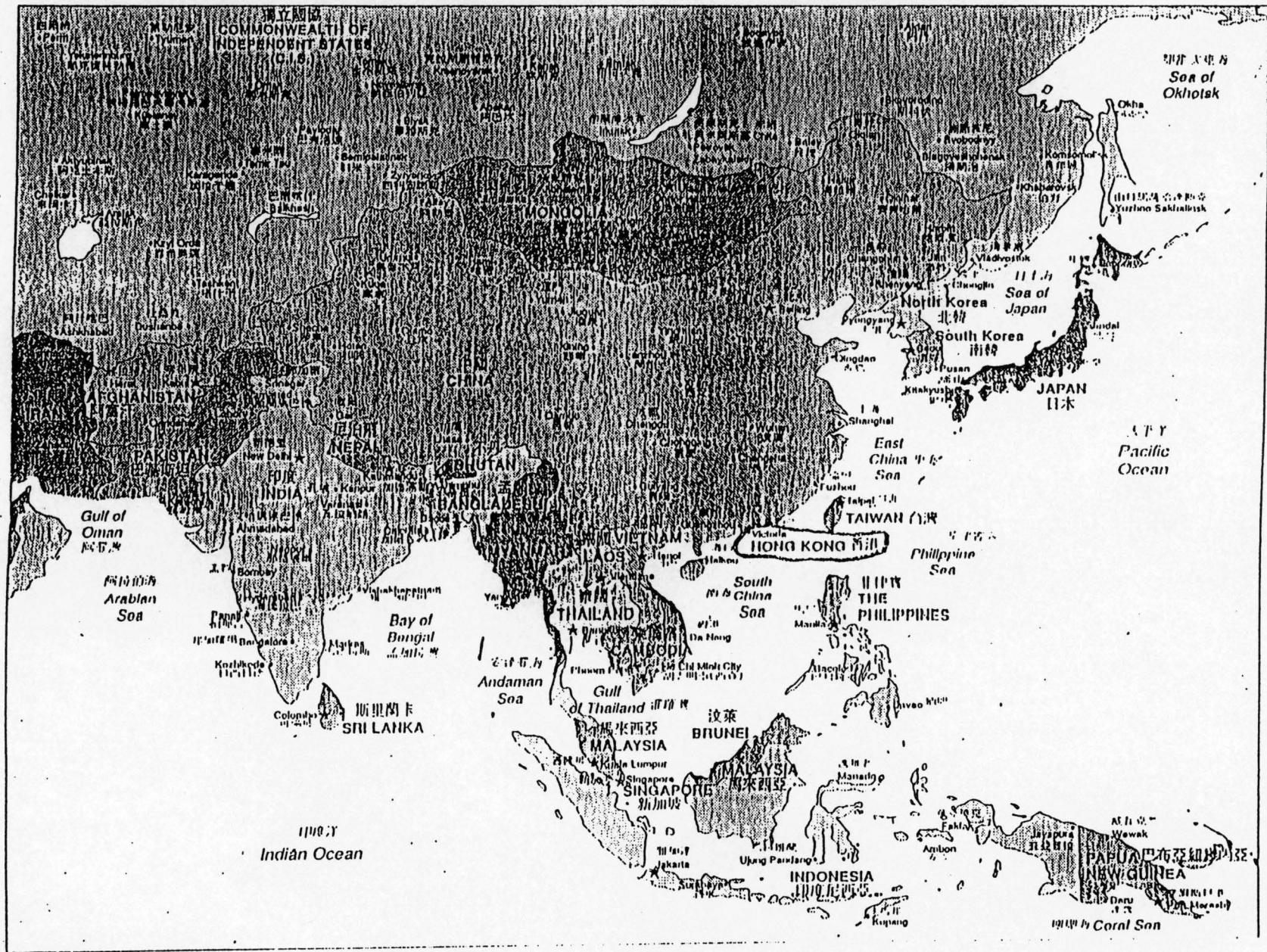
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## Appendix la: Map of Hong Kong





1b



## Appendix 2a

### "English for Arts Students" (EAS) 1993-1994

According to the EAS Teacher's Guide this year, the course has the following objectives:

Its primary objective is to "help students to produce well-researched, solidly argued, and satisfactorily written academic essays" (p.7). The course also has five subordinate objectives; they are to help students to:

- a) extract essential information from academic texts, lectures, and seminars in English;
- b) analyze and evaluate sources and information;
- c) synthesize and organize information to produce coherent spoken and written discourse;
- d) express clearly and correctly the major forms of spoken and written academic discourse (e.g., summary, description, evaluation, explanation, argument, etc);
- e) develop personal learning strategies.

To achieve these objectives, ten units were produced, and are to be used throughout the 20-week course. What follows is a brief summary of the ten units:

Unit 1: "Orientation": this unit introduces students to the course--its objectives, and the different teaching methods that are used to fulfill the objectives.

Unit 2: "Learning Strategies": the aim of the unit is to help students to develop their own learning strategies. This goal is achieved through asking students to think about these issues:

- What are the differences between school and university?
- How can and should one adapt to university life and meet its academic requirements?
- What are the main approaches to study and learning?
- How can one modify his own learning strategies to become an effective learner?

Unit 3: "Researching and Planning Essays": the objective here is to help students research and plan essays. In particular, it attempts to help them to:

- consider the use of source materials in preparing for an essay;
- access information, extract key points, and take notes;
- analyze the requirements of assignment and examination questions;
- appreciate the main types of essay questions;
- organize subject matter through the use of an effective outline.

Unit 4: "Oral Presentations": the aim is to help students to prepare and give an oral presentation. In particular, the unit helps students to:

- access and organize information from different sources;
- construct a clear and convincing piece of discourse;
- improve techniques for introducing, developing, and concluding a presentation;

- use visual aids effectively;
- build up confidence in public speaking.

Units 5 to 10 focus on the different aspects of writing:

Unit 5: "Writing Introductions": to help students to write an effective introduction. In particular, to:

- consider common functions of introductions;
- analyze the features and assess the effectiveness of sample introductions;
- produce an acceptable introduction to a given sample essay.

Unit 6: "Thematic Development": to help students to elaborate a central thesis. In particular to:

- organize an argument by grouping points under main headings;
- write sentences and paragraphs from notes;
- make it easier for a reader to follow the "thread" in one's writing;
- consider and improve ways of expressing comparison;
- practice writing a comparative essay.

Unit 7: "Author's Attitude and Tone": to help students recognize authorial attitude and tone. In particular, to:

- recognize the difference between attitude and tone;
- identify attitude and tone in sample passages;
- compare the contrasting effects of attitude and tone;
- express attitude and manipulate tone in sample writing;
- apply what students have learned to subject reading and tasks.

Unit 8: "Presenting Research": to help students write a research paper. In particular, to:

- develop a systematic approach to investigating a topic;
- limit, focus, and direct a research topic;
- prepare a complete, coherent, and consistent argument;
- summarize research orally and respond to comments and questions;
- present research in the form of an extended essay;
- paraphrase other people's ideas, cite appropriately, and compile a bibliography.

Unit 9: "Analyzing and writing conclusions": to help students write effective conclusions. In particular to,

- relate conclusions to essay types;
- evaluate sample conclusions;
- identify the strategies and language of conclusions;
- appreciate the features of expert conclusions;
- practice writing a conclusion.

Unit 10: "Text Revision": to help students to improve a piece of writing by using a self-critical approach. In particular, to:

- use a system of first draft, revision, and proof-reading;
- classify types of improvements;
- evaluate reformulations;
- propose and carry out revisions;
- transfer skills to evaluation and improvement of students' own writing.

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**3. CLASS DEBATE**

**DEBATE TOPIC:** The true value of a university education is determined in the classroom.

- a. The class will be divided into two groups. Each group will take opposing sides of the debate topic. Discuss the points with your group and prepare a persuasive argument in support of your group's position.
- b. To help you in preparing your points and arguments, it will be very useful to anticipate those of your opponents. Some possible points for each side are provided in the tables on a detachable sheet (Appendix 4). They give you an idea about the other side's position which will help you to formulate responses. Of course, the other side will be preparing in the same way. You may be able to make arguments in addition to those already given to you in the table. For more ideas see also the self-access suggestion, Activity 5.1.
- c. Your tutor will decide with you the format for the debate. It may be more or less formal (ie a full debate, or less formal class discussion). Your tutor may ask you to take notes on the speakers' performance for a subsequent feedback session.

**4 APPROACHES TO LEARNING**

**TASK 1:** The following statements represent different approaches to learning, in terms of what motivates students to learn, and what strategies they adopt in their learning. In pairs discuss how true each of the statements below are when applied to your own studies. How many of the comments do you personally identify with? Write ALWAYS, or SOMETIMES or NEVER on the lines.

- a) I tend to study only what's set; I usually don't do anything extra \_\_\_\_\_
- b) I try to read all the references and things my teachers say we should \_\_\_\_\_
- c) I chose my present subjects mainly because of career prospects when I leave school, not because I'm particularly interested in them \_\_\_\_\_
- d) I see doing well in school as a sort of game, and therefore I play to win \_\_\_\_\_
- e) I try to relate what I have learned in one subject to what I already know in other subjects \_\_\_\_\_
- f) I find many subjects become very interesting once you get into them \_\_\_\_\_

**TASK 2:** Now try to classify the comments by allocating each one to the best place for it on the grid below.

	SURFACE	DEEP	ACHIEVING
MOTIVE			
STRATEGY			

**TASK 3:** You have just identified three approaches to study and learning. In class or at home, read the article in Appendix 5 by Biggs and Telfer (1987), entitled 'Approaches to Learning', which develops these three approaches. Quickly read the passage and take notes in particular on what is said about the relationship between the achieving, surface and deep approaches.

## 1. SURVEY AND DISCUSSION

### TASK

- a) In pairs complete the survey questionnaire in Appendix 1 with information about your partner. Then discuss your findings as a class.
- b) Compare the class results with the 'Survey on Current Students' conducted by the Office of Student Affairs at the end of 1989. (See Appendix 2)

## 2. VIDEO LISTENING

### TASK A

You have been school students for at least 13 years. Now you are university students. Think about the similarities and differences between life at school and university. Before viewing the video, note down a few points on the differences and similarities in the following table:

Differences	Similarities
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

### TASK B

View the video interview with Mr. Brandon, Dean of Students, 'From School to University' (E/VID/AS101). This may be done in class or in the Practice Lab.

The interviewer poses 3 main questions:

1. What are the principal problems students face in making the move from school to university?
  2. What are the differences in the study habits required at university - as opposed to school?
  3. What advice would you give to a student who is experiencing problems adjusting to university life?
- a) Take notes on rough paper and then complete the table in Appendix 3. You must listen carefully throughout to determine which bits of information are related to each of the three main questions.
  - b) After you complete the table, discuss it with a partner and show it to your teacher for assessment.

EAS Course 1995-96

Teachers' Introduction

Approach

The EAS course is centred on the students' own interests. The intention is to get them involved enough to want to find things out for themselves and to use their English actively as they do so. This will develop skills which will be of use to them not only at the university but also in their subsequent careers.

Our basic approach is to divide students into sub-groups and to set them working on a sequence of projects throughout the year. Each project will require students to :-

1. choose a research topic
2. carry out research collaboratively
3. present their findings, usually as a team, to the class - either in the form of a talk, or dramatization, or video recording, etc
4. write up their own contributions to the project individually in essay form

Aims

Since sub-groups will be pursuing a wide variety of topics, it is important not to lose sight of our overall aims, which remain the same for all classes and all sub-groups regardless of choice of topic. These aims have been spelt out in some detail for teachers in this guide but have been presented in much briefer form for the students, so that they can absorb them more easily.

It is not suggested that we teach students to do all the things we have listed beneath each main aim in this guide; we obviously wouldn't have time. The hope is that students are already capable of doing most of them after a fashion. What they need is practice in order to do them better.

Materials

As the student guide points out, most of the materials used on this course will come from the students themselves as they work their way through their projects. The purpose of this is to enable students to wean themselves from reliance on handouts from their teachers and so to become more genuinely independent. A certain number of teacher-led activities are nevertheless suggested in the early stages of the course, in order to help students to see how to go about their projects more efficiently.

For students who find it difficult to come up with materials of their own - a very small minority in practice - we are continuing to provide reading resources from which teachers may make suitable selections. These resources currently consist of :-

1. Three series of books on controversial social issues, which are kept on the EAS shelves in the English Centre Library and on the open shelves in the Main Library.

2. Photocopied articles and extracts from books on topics of potential interest to the students. These are stored in the EAS filing cabinet drawer in the General Office.

We are also continuing to add to our collection of EAS films and documentaries. Students are encouraged to make use of these on their projects. Many of the shorter documentaries are suitable for class use as well. Teachers are issued with an updated catalogue from time to time.

### Calendar of Work

A calendar of work is attached, showing what we shall be doing and when.

1. The month or so leading up to the first Reading Week will be spent on introductory activities, suggestions for which are appended.

2. The period between the first Reading Week and the Christmas Break will be occupied by Project 1, which will lead to an oral presentation and an essay.

3. From Christmas to the Lunar New Year students will be working on Project 2, which will require an oral presentation but not an essay.

4. Finally, from the second Reading Week until the end of the academic year students will work on Project 3, which will culminate in an oral presentation and an essay once again.

On the calendar, 40 contact hours are scheduled as class hours (C), in which teachers will meet with the whole class. 2 tutorial contact hours per student (T), one in the first semester and the other in the second semester, are set aside for essay draft feedback to students. These tutorials may be given to sub-groups or individuals, as appropriate. Sub-groups or individuals not scheduled for a tutorial in a given week are required to carry on with their project work outside class in the normal way during that week. Finally 2 hours are available for comments on marked essays. These comments may be delivered to the class as a whole (C), or to individuals or sub-groups in tutorials (T).

Teachers may wish to wish to modify this calendar in places to suit their classes. This is perfectly acceptable, provided each student receives 44 contact hours of English over the year. Teachers will need to check carefully that this is the case when planning modifications.

It will be noted that, in addition to their 44 contact hours, students are required to do 16 further hours of project-related work outside class (PW). This will consist of research, planning and writing related to their chosen topics. The course will therefore run for 60 hours in all over the 24 weeks of the academic year.

## Assessment

Student performance on the EAS course will be indicated by a final letter grade, from A to F, which will be entered on the students' transcripts. Continuous assessment grades will count for 70% of the final letter grade and a test score for 30% (see table of weightings attached).

### (a) Continuous Assessment

Students will be awarded a letter grade for each of the following :-

#### Semester 1

- Oral presentation 1 (6 or 7 mins. each student), performed individually or in a team.
- Essay 1 (1000-1200 words), written individually.
- Class participation Semester 1.

#### Semester 2

- Oral presentation 2 (6 or 7 mins. each student), performed individually or in a team.
- Oral presentation 3 (6 or 7 mins. each student), performed individually or in a team.
- Essay 2 (1000-1200 words), written individually.
- Class participation Semester 2.

### (b) Final Test

In the final test students will be required to write an academic essay. Details of the test will be made available to teachers and students as soon as possible.

Criteria for the award of letter grades are attached. Grades may be entered on the mark sheet provided.

We shall be attempting to standardize essay marking more systematically this year. An outline of our approach to this is attached.

At the end of the year weighted scores, converted from letter grades, will be entered on record cards and summed to produce the final letter grade for entry onto transcripts. Scores will be weighted as indicated in the table of weightings.

## Attendance

Students are required to attend at least 80% of classes and tutorials. If they do not, they may have to repeat the EAS course next year.

### Appendix 3a

Samples of syllabus of the first-year English Literature Course in HKU between 1913 and 1974

What follows is a sample of syllabuses used in English Literature courses run by the English Department between 1912 and 1975. The parameters are set between these two years because 1912 was when English literature courses were first offered, and 1974 was the last year before the English Department merged with the Department of European Languages to form the Department of English and Comparative Literature. I have chosen syllabuses from the first-year English Literature course, one syllabus representing each of the seven decades.

1910s:

The Syllabus of 1913-1914:

Chaucer: "Prologue" and "The Nun's Priest's Tale"  
Shakespeare: *Henry V* and *Twelfth Night*  
Palgrave: *Golden Treasury*. Book I  
Burke: "Speech on American Taxation"

1920s:

The Syllabus of 1923-1924:

Peacock: *Selected English Essays*  
Goldsmith: *Vicar of Wakefield*  
Burke: *American Speeches*  
Goldsmith: *Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*

1930s:

The Syllabus of 1934-1935:

Goldsmith: *Vicar of Wakefield*  
Peacock: *Selected English Essays*  
Headland and Treble: *A Dramatic Reader*, Bk. III  
Aubrey Stewart: *The Tale of Troy*  
Barrie: *The Admirable Crichton*  
Eckersley: *England and the English*  
Palgrave: *Golden Treasury*  
Newbolt: *A Book of Verse*

The 1940s:

The Syllabus of 1940-1941:

Goldsmith: *Vicar of Wakefield*  
Headland and Treble: *A Dramatic Reader*, Bk. III  
Aubrey Stewart: *The Tale of Troy*  
Barrie: *The Admirable Crichton*  
Palgrave: *Golden Treasury*  
Collins, *A Book of Narrative Verse*

The 1950s:

The Syllabus of 1955-1956:

Johnson: *Rasselas*  
Gibbon: *Selections*  
Pope: *Windsor Forest*  
Thomson: *The Castle of Indolence*, Canto I  
Swift: *Gulliver's Travels*  
Fielding: *Joseph Andrews*  
Goldsmith: *The Vicar of Wakefield*  
Sheridan: *The School for Scandal*  
Goldsmith: *She Stoops to Conquer*  
Addison: *Essays*  
Boswell: *Life of Johnson*  
Johnson: *Vanity of Human Values*  
Gray and Collins: *Poems*  
Grabbe: *The Village* (with Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*)  
Cowper: *Selections*

1960s:

The Syllabus of 1962-1963:

Course A: Mediaeval and Renaissance:

Paper 1:

Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales*:  
"General Prologue" and  
"The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale"  
Selections of Middle English and Lyrics  
*Everyman*

Paper 2:

Sidney: "Apologie for Poetrie"  
Spenser: *Selections*  
Bacon: *Essays*  
Selections of Renaissance Poetry

Course B: Renaissance and Modern:

Paper 3:

Marlowe: *Dr. Faustus*  
Shakespeare: *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*  
*Much Ado about Nothing*  
Beaumont and Fletcher: *Knight of the Burning Pestle*

Paper 4:

*An Anthology of 20th Century Verse*  
E.M. Forster: *A Passage to India*  
Aldous Huxley: *Crome Yellow*  
D.H. Lawrence: *Short Stories*  
O. O'Casey: *The Silver Tassie*  
G.B. Shaw: *Heartbreak House*  
H.G. Wells: *Mr. Polly*  
V. Woolf: *The Common Reader*

1970s:

The Syllabus of 1972-1973:

Paper 1:

Chaucer

Malory

Skelton

Caxton

Scottish poets

Shakespeare

Milton

Paper 2:

Shelley

Keats

Byron

Victorian poets

The novel from Scott to Hardy



### Appendix 3b

Samples of Examination questions of English Literature courses in the University of Hong Kong between 1960 and 1995

**1960s:**

English Literature for First Year Students, Paper 1, 1962

Translate and comment on two of these pieces from Chaucer's "General Prologue." (Three extracts from the "General Prologue" are given.)

English Literature for First Year Students, Paper 1, 1963

Write on THREE of these aspects of *Everyman*:

- the theme
- the characterization
- the structure
- the poetry
- the use of metaphor

Lawrence, Forster, Joyce, and Shaw, 1964

What is the importance in *A Portrait..* of ONE of the following incidents: the quarrel at the Christmas dinner; the retreat and the sermon about hell; Stephen's conversation with the Director about his vocation.

Shakespeare, 1968

*The Tempest* has been described as romance, pastoral drama, masque, and tragi-comedy. Do any of these definitions help in interpreting the play?

**1970s:**

English Literature for First Year Students, Paper 1, 1972

"In his poetry Robert Graves triumphantly reconciles romantic content with a classical sense of form." How far do you agree?

English Literature for First Year Students, Paper 1, 1973

Compare the handling of love and courtship as a theme in sixteenth-century poetry with its handling in Metaphysical poetry.

Survey of Genres of English Literature: Novels, 1976

E.M. Forster says "the novel is sogged with humanity." With reference to some of the novels you have read, discuss the contention that the characters are the most important element in a novel.

### Early Modern English Literature, 1976

Consider the importance of Gertrude and Ophelia in relation to Hamlet's problems.

1980s:

### English Literature for First Year Students: Drama, 1984

"The true theme of Eliot's plays is the discovery by the heroes of their religious vocation." Discuss.

### English Literature for First Year Students: Novels, 1985

"Nineteenth century novels place greater emphasis on the plot, in contrast to twentieth century novels in which characters are more important." Discuss in reference to at least TWO novels.

### Introduction to Contemporary English Language and Literature: Contemporary Novels, Poetry, and Drama, 1986

Write a critical appreciation of one of the following poems. (Four poems, are given: Charles Tomlinson's "Against Portraits," Edward Lucie-Smith's "Silence," Thom Gunn's "Expression," and Hugo Williams' "Tides.")

### Introduction to Literary Studies I: English Literature, 1987

Faustus asks, "Is not thy soul thine own?" To what extent would you agree that this is the central question of Marlowe's play?

1990s:

All questions are from Introduction to Literary Studies in English:

1990:

From your reading of two of the following: *Julius Caesar*, 1984, and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, do you detect any concerns about language that the authors have in common?

1992:

"Literature does not only give aesthetic pleasure, it is also a criticism of life." Do you agree? Discuss with reference to some of the texts in the syllabus.

1993:

Discuss ideas about the relationship between individual and society which you have come across in the texts.

1994:

With reference to at least two of the texts you have read for this course, write an essay on "the hero."

## Appendix 4

The "Writing Skills" course is to be taught in the first semester in the "English for Arts Students" (EAS) course:

### Overview of the course

Unit	Concept	In-class Exercise	Assignment
1	The Structure of Introductions	1	1 An Introduction
2	Referencing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Paraphrasing</li><li>- Summarizing</li><li>- Quoting</li><li>- Evaluating Arguments</li><li>- Writing Footnotes/ Endnotes</li><li>- Compiling a Bibliography</li></ul>	2	2 Critical Review of Articles
3	Cohesion and Coherence	3	
4	Levels of Formality	4	
5	Levels of Assertiveness	5	
6	The Structure of Conclusions	6	3 Research Paper

### The Teaching Process

On the first day of class, the teacher:

1. introduces students to the objectives of the writing program;
2. explains the syllabus to students;
3. explains to students how the concepts are embedded in a piece of writing and how the concepts shape the structure of a piece of academic writing;
4. instructs students to select a research topic, which they are interested in investigating;
5. tells students how each of the in-class exercises and take home assignments leads to the next one, culminating in a critical review and a research paper;
6. explains to students how their writing will be assessed.

During the rest of the semester, the following "writing concepts" are taught:

### Unit 1: "The Structure of Introductions"

The unit focuses on components commonly found in an introduction. They include "Background Information" (the historical, geographical, philosophical background to the issue discussed in the paper), "Directions" (how the paper is organized), "Definition of Terms" (the ways terms are used in the essay), and "Definition of Scope" (areas to be covered in the essay).

#### In-class Exercise 1

Students are asked to analyze the structure of introductions taken from a book, a journal article, and a student essay, and to identify the components in them. They are also asked to discuss the ways these components are ordered, think of alternative ways of arranging them; and the strengths and weaknesses of the different alternatives.

#### Assignment 1: "An Introduction to a Research Paper"

In this assignment, students are asked to write an introduction to an essay that incorporates the components discussed in Unit 1.

### Unit 2: "Referencing"

The main purpose here is to familiarize students with the process of selecting and synthesizing information from different sources, incorporating it into their essay, and building an argument based on these sources of information. To achieve these aims, the skills of paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting are taught. The unit also cautions students against the danger of plagiarism by emphasizing the need to use "verbs of attribution" (e.g., Smith argues/claims/reports that...), in-text citations, footnotes/endnotes, and to include a bibliography at the end of the paper. Students are also taught how to evaluate arguments by using "words of appraisal" (e.g., Smith's contention is ill-founded/biased/one-sided because...).

#### In-class Exercise 2

Students read a short article that contains several arguments. They have to summarize each of the arguments by using verbs of attribution, and then evaluate the arguments by using words of appraisal. An example of the summary and evaluation of an argument looks like this: "X contends that.../I think this argument is ill-founded because..."

#### Assignment 2

Students are asked to look for four articles related to the research topic they have chosen and to write a short literature review. In doing so, they should try to make adequate use of the concepts they have learned in this unit as well as those in the previous unit.

### Unit 3: "Cohesion and Coherence"

This unit pays attention to the development of ideas in a piece of writing and to the link between paragraphs and sentences. "Cohesive devices" such as "topic sentences," "discourse markers," "transitional sentences" are reviewed.

#### In-class Exercise 3

Students are asked to identify the cohesive devices in an academic text. They are then asked to re-arrange a series of jumbled sentences into a logical text

and to link them up by using cohesive devices.

#### Units 4 and 5: "Levels of Formality" and "Levels of Assertiveness"

Whereas the first three units draw students' attention to form, these two units are concerned with audience, tone, and style. Students are made aware of the fact that they have to be conscious of the audience they are writing for, the nature of their task (whether they are sharing a personal experience or writing a research paper based on theories and empirical data), and the tone they wish to adopt (objective, satirical, argumentative, deliberately provocative).

##### In-Class Exercise 4

Students listen to an informal talk. Afterwards, they are given the transcript of the talk. They are to identify the features in it that make the presentation informal, and then to re-write the talk into an academic essay.

##### In-Class Exercise 5

Students are given two pieces of writing: the first piece is an extract from an academic journal article; the second is a part of an essay written by a student who attempts to incorporate the writer's ideas into his essay. The student's essay contains inaccuracies in reflecting the tone of the writer. For example, the writer says "X could possibly account for Y phenomenon," but the student re-writes it as "X clearly explains why Y happens." Students are asked to correct these inaccuracies.

#### Unit 6: "The Structure of Conclusions"

This unit discusses components commonly found in the conclusion of an academic text. They include "Summary of the main points discussed in the paper," "Limitations of the paper," and "Suggestions for future research."

##### In-Class Exercise 6

Several conclusions taken from books, journal articles, and student essays are discussed. Students are asked to analyze the structure of these conclusions and to identify the components. They are then given a short piece of writing that does not have a conclusion, and are asked to apply what they have learned in this unit to the writing of a final paragraph.

##### Assignment 3: "Research Paper"

The first two assignments--revised and edited in the light of concepts discussed in Units 4 and 5, and a conclusion to the paper--are synthesized into a final paper to be handed in at the end of the term.

At every stage of the learning process, students are reminded to look at their writing as a process. For each assignment, they are encouraged to draft, write, get feedback from their peers and teacher, then revise and edit.

## Appendix 5a

### A Century of Chinese American Women Writers: The Tradition behind Maxine Hong Kingston

#### Turn of the Century

Chinese migration to the U.S.A. began in the late 1840s when gold was discovered in California. So the first immigrants sailed from China for the "Beautiful Country" ("Mei Kuo") to take up jobs in the gold mines. When the gold-seeking adventure was over, many stayed, and others from their homeland came to join them in this new country. In the 1860s, when Leland Stanford decided to build the trans-Atlantic Railway, a great number of Chinese men were recruited.

These men contributed their sweat, blood, and even their lives to bring this monumental task to its completion. Other Chinese men came to the U.S.A. to work in sugar-cane plants; still others worked in, and later on set up their laundry shops or restaurants. The Chinese tended to congregate, and this led to the development of Chinatowns in big cities, such as New York and San Francisco.

Despite their efforts to grow roots in America, the early Chinese settlers were not welcomed by their "hosts." For many decades to come, they were discriminated against in many ways, especially by laws that aimed at harassing them. To cite a few examples: the 1860 law forbids "Mongolians" from attending public schools or gaining admission to public hospitals; the 1870 law forbids the peddling of vegetables hung from shoulder-borne poles (a custom peculiar to the Chinese); the 1875 ordinance requires all Chinese who were arrested to have their queues cut off; the 1879 law forbids corporations and municipal works from hiring Chinese and permits cities to remove Chinese from their boundaries to specified areas.

The Japanese, on the other hand, were treated differently. Japan had undergone rapid modernization since Admiral Perry forced open her doors in 1854. By the end of the 19th Century, she was already a world power on the strength of her military and technological developments. Her defeat of China in the war of 1895, and another war against Russia in 1905 put her among the strongest nations in the world. Beginning in the late 19th Century, her conquest of China was so rapid that she colonized not only Taiwan, Korea, but also vast expanses of land in Manchuria. In the 1930s, she moved south into inland China, and in a short period of time, captured the major cities.

Because of her strength at home and in the world, her citizens who lived abroad, including those in the U.S.A., were well-received. The different treatments received by the Chinese and the Japanese in America were essential background to my discussion of the writing careers of the first two Chinese American women writers: Edith and Winnifred Eaton.

The Eaton sisters were Eurasians, born to an English father and a Chinese mother. They were raised by missionaries, grew up in England, and then in Canada.

Edith Eaton wrote under the pen-name "Sui Sin Far," meaning literally "water fragrant flower," or "narcissus. Although she is only half-Chinese, and in appearance looks more Caucasian than Asian, she chose to identify herself with the Chinese, and used her writing to defend the Chinese people in

America. In her first book, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, which contains a collection of short stories, she portrays the Chinese with great sympathy, and protests loudly against racial discrimination. Other themes in these stories include the identity crisis, social discrimination, and sexual discrimination that Eurasian women who lived in North America at the turn of the century experienced.

Her sister, Winnifred Eaton, took a totally different route and wrote for a different reason. Winnifred Eaton chose to conceal her real identity: she invented the myth that her birthplace was Nagasaki and that her mother was a Japanese noblewoman. Under the pseudonym Onoto Watanna, she produced a series of romantic novels that have exotic Japanese settings. The typical story features a pair of lovers (usually one is American or English, and the other Japanese); the protagonists fall in love with each other, encounter difficulties (e.g., family objections), surmount these hurdles, and are finally united in marriage. Her novels proved to be extremely popular, and many of them were turned into movies. Her works, according to a book entitled *Essays on Japanese Literature* by Thomas E. Swann and Katsuhiko Takeda, is "artistically of the second order" (quoted in Ling, 1990c:54).

## World War II

The almost century-old American attitude towards the Chinese and Japanese, as described in the last section, was almost completely reversed in 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked. After this incident, the Japanese began to be seen as hated enemy. Anti-Japanese sentiments soared rapidly throughout the country; people of Japanese origin were put into concentration camps. On the contrary, China was now regarded as an ally, a fellow sufferer of a massive military aggression launched by the Japanese. There began an interest in China, her history, culture, and people. This historical climate provided a favorable environment for a number of literary works by Chinese writers and about China to emerge. In the decade of the 1940s alone, ten books by Chinese American women writers--including one translation, four autobiographies, and five novels--were published.

Adet Lin (age 16) and her younger sister Anor Lin (age 13), daughters of the famous Chinese writer and philologist Lin Yutang, translated Hsieh Pingying's *Girl Rebel*, which is the record of Hsieh's life as a woman soldier. The translation is important because it introduces to the West a very different image of the Chinese woman: Hsieh left behind the comfort and safety of home to fight alongside men soldiers against the Japanese. This image is radically different from the stereotype that the American reading public was used to: the demure, docile, weak Chinese woman who spends most of her time at home, and who sees her only mission in life as serving her husband and raising her children.

Besides their translation, the Lin sisters also produced their own works. Adet, who later published under the pen-name Tan Yun, wrote a novel (her only novel) entitled *Flames From the Rock* (1943). Anor, who preferred later in life to be called by her Chinese name Lin Tai Yi, wrote *War Tide* (1943), *The Golden Coin* (1946), and *The Lilacs Overgrown* (1960). Based on their observation during a short stay in China, the sisters described a sector of Chinese society and the lives of individuals during war-time. The Lin sisters demonstrated fervent love for China in their writing and expressed dissatisfaction over their father's choice to remain in New York at a time when their fellow countrymen were suffering from foreign invasion and most needed them.



Other women "war" novelists during this time included Han Suyin, born to a Chinese father and a Belgian mother, who spent her childhood in China, and her adult life in America, Europe, and Asia; Helena Kuo, who moved to the U.S.A. when she was an adult, and married a Chinese American painter; Mai-mai Sze, who was born in Beijing, and educated in England and America. Like Adet and Anor Lin, these writers depicted life in China during World War II, and effects of the war on individual lives. Like the Lin sisters too, their patriotic sentiments for their motherland were clearly expressed.

### The 1950s to the 1970s

Three groups of writers are discussed here: The first group--including Maria Yen, Yuan-tsung Chen, Nien Cheng, and Eileen Chang--were born in China and emigrated to the U.S.A. when they were adults. The subject of their autobiographies/novels are either personal experiences or descriptions of the Chinese society under Communist rule. While the writers in the 1940s portrayed China in a very positive light, and showed great respect for those who endured through the war, despite severe sufferings, writers of the 1950s were, in the main, disappointed with the situation in China and were negative and critical about the Communist party and the way it governed the country.

While the first group of women writers were writing out of personal experiences they had in China, a second group wrote about the country from a distance. For these writers, many of whom were either born in America, or emigrated to the U.S.A. when they were children, China is a distant ancestral homeland, a place "recollected from memory," or "never known personally but pieced together from the reminiscences of elders or from romanticized images prevalent in the West" (Ling, 1990c:97). Authors belonging to this group include Bette Bao Lord, Dr. Hazel Lin, and Virginia Lee.

A third group of women writers, who were born and raised in America, were less concerned about distant China than their immediate environment--America itself, and usually the Chinatown community within which they grew up. Names to be mentioned are Chuang Hua, Diana Chang, Jade Snow Wong, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, and Aimee E. Liu. Their works focus on the conflicts that they, as Chinese American females experience. The first kind of conflicts has to do with their dual identity. A question that they constantly ask is: Am I Chinese or American, or Chinese-American (both are nouns), or Chinese American (the "Chinese" in this case is an adjective, which merely describes the person's physical appearance and her ethnic origin; the emphasis is on the second word--"American," which is a noun, the real identity). The second kind of struggles concerns their gender: as women, and women belonging to a minority ethnic group who live in a society dominated by WASPS (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) men, they need to assert themselves and to fight for more recognition and greater equality.

### Appendix 5b

The two books (*The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*), which contain the four stories by Maxine Hong Kingston (that are used in the module--Chapter 6) can be found at the back of the thesis.

## Appendix 6a

English for Arts Students  
1996-1997  
Tutorial Groups 128, 129

To help me design a module entitled "Reading and Writing about English Literature," I would like you to respond to the following two questions:

**1. Please circle the appropriate answer:**

Did you take English Literature as a subject in your HKCEE?

Yes

No

Did you take English Literature as a subject in your HKALE?

Yes

No

**2. In the following space, write down, in a paragraph or so, some of the difficulties you have encountered when you study English literature.**

## Appendix 6b

### Needs Analysis: Students' perceptions of their needs

#### Responses:

1. Since English is not my mother tongue, I have to look up the dictionary for some difficult vocabulary quite frequently--sometimes I feel tired of doing so.
2. Since literature is bound to be written in language, the language of English literature, therefore, is inevitably foreign. Before understanding literature itself, I have to understand literally the words by which ideas are conveyed. If the problem could be solved only by consulting the dictionary, it would be counted as no problem no more. Besides, the vocabulary and phrases, the structures of many sentences are confusing every so often.
3. The original function of literature is communication. If I can't understand what the writers write, many significances in literary works are meaningless to me, let alone the inner spirit. Some writers who want to express the characteristics on the locality use slangs, jibes, common sayings, and puns. Every time I lose much. I can't appreciate the words and styles.
4. When I read English literature, it often happens that I know every word of a sentence while I can't understand what the sentence means or get the connotation of the sentence.
5. When I study English literature, the biggest problem I had encountered was my poor vocabulary. The textbooks use many rare words so I spent much time in consulting the dictionary. Besides, the textbooks' language is quite different from that I had been used to. It is not easy to understand, not to mention to analyze and appreciate.
6. Some of the words used by some writers are not common, this is the main source of difficulty in reading. Besides, the writing style of some writers are not close to ordinary English writers, making the reading less enjoyable.
7. When I read some English books, I find the structure of some of the stories too complicated. I can't fully understand what the writer is going to express.
8. Sometimes, when story is not narrated in a straight-forward order, then I find it difficult to follow the plot and development of the story. Then I find reading the stories difficult.
9. I know little about the history of English literature, therefore, when I read a novel or something else, I'm unfamiliar with the writer, the background, etc.--these make me unable to comprehend the writing thoroughly.
10. It is hard to understand some fiction of English literature (e.g., novels, short stories, etc.) because I do not have enough background information. Also, because the plot of the story is quite far away from my life and concerns, some of them are quite boring. I do not have similar feelings with the writer.
11. It is difficult for me to identify the time/period of some of the stories

very clearly. Sometimes the way the stories are presented are difficult for me. Sometimes the writers like to use flashback or "stream of consciousness" techniques. This is quite confusing, and make me lose interest.

12. Some of the novels and stories I have read in the English literature class are not easy to understand, although the words may not be difficult.
13. Some English literary texts contain allusions to Greek and Roman mythologies, or Bible stories. So to understand the texts, one would need to find out about these mythologies and stories. They are more than just names. If I fail to know them, the whole paragraph or the whole chapter which contains these names will mean nothing.
14. Sometimes a work may describe the rituals or the habits of the English people, but it is difficult for me to imagine those things for our culture is different from that of Britain or America, or the Western world.
15. For me, the greatest problem is the lack of knowledge about masterpieces. I don't know many famous writers and works. I seldom read such books before.
16. I am in lack of the whole conception of the history of Western literature. I think that the masterpieces have in close relation with their contemporary environment or contemporary thoughts. So it is necessary for us to know some background information so that we can think in the writer's place.
17. There is always something hidden between the lines in a good fiction and the readers are demanded to find it out. As it often the case, it is the quintessence of the book. In spite of the efforts in looking up new words in the dictionary, I can't tell you why this is a good novel. Whenever I meet such problems, I would be at a loss. It seems that I can read but not appreciate.
18. What troubles me most when studying English literature is that I can't see the point. These literary works are invaluable indeed, but I don't know for what they are called masterpieces.
19. Actually I was in a mess when encountering English literature for the first time. It looked so different from the so-called "literature" which I was taught in the past. The difference lies not only in their cultural backgrounds, but in the approaches by which we study them.
20. I wonder, when studying literary works, whether we should analyze them according to formal critical methods or simply use our own intuition and ordinary rules of looking at things. I always have the feeling that I know too few critical methods.
21. I can't "feel" English literature. If I read Chinese literature, I would be moved easily and then comprehend, there would be an echo in my mind, but I am no able to do so when studying English literature.
22. I realize that I am in lack of imagination and life experience. These lacks also affect my ability to "feel" about literature, especially English literature, which is so remote from me.
23. When I entered the world of English literature, mixed with the climaxes of sadness and joy, I could not help releasing my emotions and enjoying

those words of wisdom to my heart's content. But because of the lack of time. I choose certain parts to read--parts that are important--and then worry about grades.

24. Although I was quite interested in reading and appreciating all those great works. I felt, after all, that the works were of too much bulk. Since the reading was too much, I couldn't take close reading as a method. I just had to skip lines in order to catch the main points of the whole piece.
25. I always admire my lecturers, who could open the world of the story, and get wonderful insight from it. But I can only listen to them, I can't do it on my own. When I read a story on my own, I don't know how to read it well so that I could gain the same ideas.
26. I had not studied English literature in secondary school, so I felt very nervous when I first encountered English stories in my course. After careful reading, I could understand the stories, what they say, but I do not know how I am supposed to respond to them properly.
27. I always feel very nervous in tutorials when I am asked to answer questions asked by my tutor, not because I have not prepared well, but because I don't know what I am going to say is acceptable to him or not. I think what I need is training is how to read literature properly.
28. I felt very upset when I got my first essay back from my tutor (English Department). It was full of crosses. At the end of the paper, she said, this is not the way to treat a literature topic. You misunderstood the question. The essay does contain some good ideas, but your English needs to be improved. Go and see your English Centre tutor. I think I need to learn how to write a literature essay.
29. More instruction in how to read and write about literature is needed.  
I think the idea of a module on reading and writing literature is a good one.
30. I have taken English literature since Form 4, so reading English literature stories is not very difficult for me. But I think my English is still not very good. I would like more practice in how to write good essays.
31. I have little difficulty reading English literary works, because I have had some good training when I was in secondary school. I had a very industrious and responsible teacher. I was lucky.
32. No difficulty.
33. Could not think of any major difficulties.

### Content analysis of the Responses:

Areas of difficulty	Number of responses
1. Language barrier	6
2. Unfamiliarity with background of English literature	5
3. Lack of a panoramic view of English literature	2
4. Failure to appreciate English literature	4
5. Unfamiliarity with methods of literary study	9
6. Lack of sensitivity to literary works	2
7. Lack of knowledge in how to write a good literature paper	5
8. Lack of time	2
9. No major difficulty	3

## Appendix 6c

English for Arts Students  
1996-1997  
Groups 128, 129

### Evaluation of the "Reading and Writing about Literature" Module

#### Part I:

Please respond to the following questions by circling the appropriate number:

- 1 = Strongly agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Disagree
- 4 = Strongly disagree

1. I have found **reading** Maxine Hong Kingston's stories to be interesting:

"No Name Woman"

1                      2                      3                      4

"White Tigers"

1                      2                      3                      4

"The Father from China"

1                      2                      3                      4

"The American Father"

1                      2                      3                      4

2. I have found **discussing** Maxine Hong Kingston's stories to be interesting:

"No Name Woman"

1                      2                      3                      4

"White Tigers"

1                      2                      3                      4

"The Father from China"

1                      2                      3                      4

"The American Father"

1                      2                      3                      4

...2/



3. I have found the approaches to studying narratives useful in helping me to read Kingston's short stories:

Todorov

1                      2                      3                      4

Propp

1                      2                      3                      4

The New Critics

1                      2                      3                      4

Barthes

1                      2                      3                      4

4. I think I will be able to use these approaches to analyze other stories on my own:

1                      2                      3                      4

5. I think the writing skills taught in the module will enable me to write a literature essay:

1                      2                      3                      4

Part II:

Please feel free to comment on any aspect of the module. For example, the selection of stories; the "critical approaches" (which are based on literary theory); the ways the tutorials are organized and conducted; the workload, etc. Or anything else you would like to say regarding the module.

## Appendix 6d

### Evaluation of the "Reading and Writing about Literature" Module

#### Students' Responses:

##### Part I:

Item	SA (*)	A	DA	SD
1				
"No Name Woman	12%	58%	30%	0%
"White Tigers"	12%	55%	33%	0%
"The Father from China"	6%	55%	39%	0%
"The American Father"	0%	61%	39%	0%
2				
"No Name Woman"	18%	61%	21%	0%
"White Tigers"	12%	61%	27%	0%
"The Father from China"	15%	64%	21%	0%
"The American Father"	0%	73%	27%	0%
3				
Todorov	30%	70%	0%	0%
Propp	18%	73%	9%	0%
The New Critics	6%	85%	9%	0%
Barthes	45%	45%	10%	0%
4	12%	64%	14%	10%
5	30%	45%	15%	10%

\* SA =Strongly Agree  
 A =Agree  
 DA =Disagree  
 SD =Strongly Disagree

## Part II:

### Comments and Suggestions about the Module:

1. I enjoyed the discussion of the stories. The theories learned in the tutorials are useful. It is in fact more interesting to learn those boring theories through reading and discussing stories.
2. What is taught are quite good; but spending two hours on a story is too little. Among the stories, I like "No Name Woman" most. At first, I found it not a boring story, the vocabulary is not difficult, but the plot very confusing. After the lessons, however, and after Todorov's ideas have been introduced to us, I understood the story more and could appreciate the style and techniques that Maxine Hong Kingston uses.
3. The tutorials are conducted quite well. The workload was not too heavy. But there wasn't enough time to discuss the stories. The stories are ok but I found "The American Father" quite boring. I think perhaps it is because it is too long, and I do not have enough background information to understand it. But after the teacher provided some background information, and led us to examine an extract carefully, I could see more in the story. But I wish we had more time to examine more extracts, and more opportunities to express our opinions. That would be better.
4. The tutorials are interesting and useful. Among the stories, I like "No Name Woman" and "White Tigers" more. "No Name Woman" is very interesting and the words are not difficult. However, before the tutorial, I found that it was difficult for me to identify the time/period of the story very clearly. For example, I didn't know whether the daughter is presenting the real truth or her imagination. Also, I don't know if she is mentioning the things that are occurring now or in the past. But all in all, this story is interesting and can attract my attention. "White Tigers" I like more because it is more straight-forward, and I can follow the plot easily.
5. I like the tutorials very much. They are well-organized and the atmosphere is free for us to express our opinions. Among the stories, I like "White Tigers" most: it is strange for the writer to make use of classical Chinese legends in such a "modern" way, but I appreciate it much. I think it is a good creation. Also, I quite appreciate the way the teacher introduces us to the study of genres through the study of fairy tales, detective stories, and then kung fu novels.
6. The teacher explains the theories very clearly. On the whole, I like the stories from *The Woman Warrior* more. But it is interesting to see how the application of literary theoretical concepts can help us to see the unity in "The Father from China," and the underlying construction of "The American Father."
7. The teacher gives full instructions in the class. I feel a great support from him. All the stories are interesting and are explained clearly to us.
8. More interesting stories should be chosen.
9. The tutorials are well-organized and conducted. I appreciate very much that the teacher encourages us to express ourselves freely in the discussion groups. The emphasis put on literary theory and writing techniques also enable us to appreciate other literary works and help us to write better essays.

10. Tutorials are well-organized. We are taught how to write good literature essays.
11. Tutorials are well-organized. What is taught is useful (literary theory and writing concepts) but the stories are not easy to understand although the vocabulary is not too difficult.
12. The module is quite good, Nothing really bothers me. The stories are not difficult to understand, although the ways Kingston transforms Chinese words, terms, and stories into English is quite strange. I don't think she should do that. She twists things around.
13. I enjoyed discussing the stories, for the teacher gives us a method and then encourages us to analyze the story. The one session I like most was when we discussed "White Tigers." The teacher asked us whether we think the idea of modernizing Chinese myths and using them for a different purpose is a good idea. Some of my classmates said it was strange, not good; but some said it was creative and innovative, and some were in between the two. I agree with the second school of thought.
14. The stories are ok, but it would be better if we could watch videos or films instead, as there is a lot of things to read in the other classes already.
15. I like the literary theory, it is very interesting, and different from what I have studied before. It is new to me although I have studied English Literature before. Also, the teacher's clear explanation helps us to understand it more. But more time should be spent on it. Too rush.
16. The literary theory would help me to appreciate other works on my own. I hope the teacher would introduce me to books that tell me more about these theories.
17. Perhaps it would be better not to concentrate just on one writer. Give us more options.
18. No major comments; the tutorials are quite good. Less reading is better.
19. The writing exercises are interesting. I like in particular the one about re-writing the story from the Aunt's point of view ("No Name Woman"). It allows me to think about the story more carefully and to view the whole incident from another perspective.
20. The two stories from *China Men* are too long and not so interesting. "No Name Woman" was confusing at first; but became more interesting when the concepts from Todorov's book helped me to understand the structure more.
21. "White Tigers" is great. So creative. I love it. The parallel between Fa Mu Lan and the writer herself is wonderful. Kingston is simply the best!
22. Some of the words used by Kingston are not common. This is the main source of difficulty. Besides, the writing style of Kingston is not close to ordinary English writers, making reading less enjoyable.
23. The tutorials are well-organized. What is taught is useful. But more

interesting stories should be chosen.

24. When I read the stories before the tutorials, I found the structure of the stories too complicated (especially "No Name Woman"). I can't fully understand what the writer is going to express. But after the tutorials, it is much better. I find it not very difficult to understand as long as I look up the unfamiliar words in the story.
25. I think the approaches to reading narratives should be taught first, and then the teacher assigns each story. Then I can think about what I do not really understand thoroughly and then ask in that tutorial. Also, I will have more to say.
26. I like the ways the tutorials are conducted. The teacher explains an approach to narratives, and then we try to apply the approach to a story (or part of it), and then we get together again to share our ideas. I have learned a lot. For example, in one tutorial, we discussed different sub-stories in "The Father from China" according to the "narrative elements" invented by the American New Critics. Then we presented our findings. Then the teacher showed us how the sub-stories are connected together to form a unity in the story. It was an interesting experience.
27. The module is good on the whole. The approaches to narratives are not difficult to understand and are quite useful for me to apply to the study of other literature works. But I think we should be given more practice in class. Although the teacher explained things clearly, not enough time was spent on each story.
28. No major criticism, but I hope next semester, we could watch movies rather than read stories.
29. The teacher allows us to express our views, that's nice. But he also guided us to know what is the correct way of reading literature and the way to organize a good essay. Very useful for my other classes.
30. The stories are ok but some are too long. Shorter ones should be chosen.
31. The workload is not too heavy compared to my other classes, so I quite enjoy the tutorials. Also, because they are well-organized, I always feel that I have learned something after each tutorial--an approach to literature and a story.
32. The teacher is conscientious in designing good classes; classes are well-organized. No complaints.
33. The concepts in the literary theory are interesting. But I don't think I have grasped them very well.

## Content analysis of the responses:

Categories of responses:	Number of responses
1. The module/the tutorials	
- Well organized	7
- Well conducted	4
- Good on the whole	3
- Interesting	1
- Useful	4
- Like them very much	1
- The atmosphere is good	1
2. The Teacher	
- Explains things clearly	2
- Gives full instructions	2
- Gives a lot of support	1
- Encourages students to speak	1
- Conscientious	1
3. Teaching method	
- Interesting to learn boring concepts through stories	1
- Enjoyed discussion of stories	3
- Could not fully understand the stories before the tutorials; after the the critical approaches have been introduced, understood the stories more	4
4. Writing literature essays	
The module helps to write better literature essays	5
5. Literary Theory	
- Useful in helping one to understand the stories	4
- Interesting	4
- Interesting but have not grasped them well	4
- Todorov: useful	2
- Propp: useful	1
- Barthes: useful	1
6. The stories	
- General:	
- More interesting stories should be chosen	2
- Stories are difficult to understand although the vocabulary is not difficult	1
- The stories are ok but would prefer watching videos	2
- Do not appreciate the way Kingston uses Chinese myths and the way she writes and uses vocabulary is strange	2
- Should not concentrate on one writer	1
- Less reading is better	1
- Some of the stories are too long;	1

should choose shorter ones

- "No Name Woman": like the story 3
- "White Tigers": interesting/great 4
- "The Father from China": quite boring 1

6. Other comments:

Workload: not too heavy 2

Not enough time to discuss the stories  
and learn the concepts 4

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